COURAGE IN POLITICS

AND OTHER ESSAYS

1885–1896

BY

COVENTRY PATMORE

Now first collected

HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW COPENHAGEN
NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE CAPE TOWN
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS SHANGHAI PEKING

1921

PRINTED IN ENGLAND
AT THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
BY FREDERICK HALL

PREFACE

'We need books of this tart cathartic virtue,' said Emerson, of Plutarch, and it is because some of us believe this requirement to be eminently fulfilled in Coventry Patmore's prose that this further selection from it has been made.[1]

Every reader will confess its tart flavour: its cathartic virtue depends upon his own good will: he must minister to himself if he can reject the temptation to throw the physic to the dogs.

Patmore's criticism, literary, artistic, and political, was based upon considered principles, and it is in his statement of these, more than in his application of them, that the virtue of his criticism consists. He deprecated the merely subjective appreciation of books, and it is to mark the fact that the many essays on other writers included here are not of that order that a small group of political articles is placed in the forefront; for in these it is the statement of principles only that can win any acceptance: the illustrations are from the vanished part of thirty-five years ago.

In the literary articles the principles he enunciates are those by which he would wish his own poetry to

[1] Patmore's own selection from his prose-contributions to periodical literature may be found in the two little books, *Principle in Art, &c.* (1889) and *Religio Poetae, &c.* (1893.)

be judged. His choice among poets and novelists is a statement of his own position. When he praises the versification of Goldsmith, the diction of Mr. Bridges, the peace of William Barnes, the manners of Mrs. Walford, he is defending the technique of *The Angel in the House*, and its story. And into Mr. Bridges' and Thomas Woolner's treatment of the classic myths he reads something of the mysticism of *The Unknown Eros*. That he should have maintained the infinite superiority of Shakespeare to Jane Austen, and the general superiority of Scott to Thackeray and Trollope, was but to hold the balance level.

The book is a book of doctrine, and is 'original' only in that it goes back to origins : the doctrines are those of Aristotle, of Goethe, of Coleridge, indeed as one can imagine Patmore saying, 'of all sensible men'. The style only that holds them together is his own.

One need not exaggerate the tartness of the flavour : it existed in Coventry Patmore, and in his writings, only as the safeguard of an inner core of sweetness, and in the ensuing essays there is not infrequent fun and at least one of his rare instances of tenderness.

These newspaper articles contain a few repetitions and things of merely temporary interest which the author doubtless would have removed had he finally prepared them for reprinting. There are other things in them which would never have been

there at all had he been infallible and impeccable. Their presence adds the ingratiating humour and pathos of human fallibility.

Mrs. Patmore has kindly permitted this reprint of copyright material. For its selection and arrangement the responsibility must rest with me, although I have not omitted to consult with Mr. Basil Champneys, the friend and biographer of Coventry Patmore.

By the kindness of Mr. Everard Meynell I have been able to use Patmore's own copies of these articles as the basis of this reprint, and the omissions indicated in a few of them correspond with his own deletions.

I have also to thank the editors of *The Fortnightly Review* and the *Saturday Review* for confirming Mrs. Patmore's permission with respect to certain articles.

A bibliography of Coventry Patmore's prose-writings, for the most part anonymous and unreprinted, is given at the end of the volume for those who may have the wish and opportunity to explore further.

F. PAGE.

CONTENTS

[The essays marked with an asterisk are—in Patmore's own collection of his newspaper articles—marked for an intended reprint, an intention now for the first time effected.]

'MANIFEST DESTINY'

[*St. James's Gazette*, December 26, 1885.]

THERE is nothing so easily averted as Manifest Destiny, if we boldly front it and bid it avaunt; and nothing so inexorable, if encountered in any other way. In the bravest and wisest hearts there are dens in which cowardice and superstition lurk; and courage and wisdom do not consist in being without such temptations, but in refusing to succumb to them. Every one must have experienced seasons of depression of spirits, during which the smallest cloud of threatening adversity seems to blot out sun, moon, and stars, and weigh down the soul as with a spiritual malaria. Whole nations, it appears, are subject to these periods of depression, as much as individuals; and there is nothing out of which crafty politicians may obtain more fatal advantages. It is in vain that persons or peoples are reminded how such ghosts have been driven back to limbo by the exorcism of a single bold deed. Through how long a series of years was it not the manifest destiny of Russia to get Constantinople; yet that prospect was thrown back almost to vanishing point by Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury some six or seven years ago; and even Mr. Gladstone's Administration was unable to bring it nearer, although that Administration has immensely increased the reality of the danger to India. For many years, and until about two months ago, many of us were oppressed —some secretly, others (like Lord Derby) avowedly— by the manifest destiny hanging over the Church of

England. Was not Mr. Gladstone, that great champion of the Church, himself so much weighed down by the almost universal feeling that he prepared for making capital out of it, asking aloud, in the columns of every journal and on every blank wall that advertised the *Nineteenth Century*, 'Is the Church of England Worth Preserving?' Now this ghost also has vanished, although there is as much real danger as ever, bating that greatest of all dangers which lay in the fear itself. Something of the same abject feeling threatens to wither our muscles of resistance in the matter of Ireland; and we are much mistaken if, in the course of the next few weeks, this sentiment is not worked upon to the utmost by the speeches of treasonous politicians. The country is ready to fall into this fatalistic stupor about everything which the Radicals assert 'must come'. If a Radical leader (say the member for Chelsea [1]) were to advocate the community of women—affirming, while he confessed the time was scarcely ripe for such a measure, that it must come soon—many people would with various degrees of despondency or the reverse resign themselves to the possibility, and begin to consider how far it would affect their interests and domestic arrangements.

This emasculate condition of the national mind is probably due in great part to our long-continued and unparalleled material prosperity. It would disappear at once at the tonic touch of a great misfortune. There are not a few, and those not among the least wise and patriotic among us, who begin to look forward to some such misfortune with hope, and in whose eyes few calamities can be more terrible

[1] [Sir Charles Dilke.]

than the panic apathy under which a great part of their fellow-countrymen are content to be led by ambitious knaves and giddy fools towards a clearly discerned destruction. The Radicals are counting too much upon this apathy if they imagine that it would continue after the first blow had been struck in the civil war they seem so anxious to figure in, after the manner of the heroes of the French Revolution.

COURAGE IN POLITICS

[*St. James's Gazette*, March 19, 1888; signed 'Coventry Patmore'.]

All men are born believers in aristocracy. Who is there—out of the House of Commons—who does not hold the fundamental dogma of politics, that the best should govern? Modern democracy means nothing but the possession of the elective power by ignorant aristocrats: by those who desire that the best should govern, but who have no sufficient means of discovering the best. When once they have discovered their imagined best, their loyalty to him is only too unbounded. They make him the master of their persons and purses, and let him deal with laws and constitutions as if none before him had ever been wise; and even the grossest self-contradictions, perpetrated, as seems to the less simple, with the most manifestly selfish motives, fail to shake the confidence he has once secured in the minds of those whose more or less conscious weakness and ignorance render them, as a rule, ridiculously suspicious.

Hence the first condition for the government of a democracy is the knowledge of the peculiar test or

tests used by the unwise for the discovery of supreme political wisdom, or that which it pleases them to regard as such. Let it be at once admitted that their crucial test is the very best which persons in their condition could adopt—nay, which even the wisest could adopt, and which all wise persons do adopt, as the first rough test by which a man is to be judged as a man and selected as a leader : courage. Courage sometimes exists without practical wisdom ; but there is a strong presumption that they go together. The possession of habitual courage implies that a man understands what he is doing and whither he is going. A fool dares not be courageous ; or if he dares, it soon ends in his destruction. In politics, as in religion and morals, men dare not see the truth which they dare not obey ; and it is universally felt that a coward must be a fool, if only in self-defence.

No one will ever be a popular favourite, or henceforward in England a political power, who is not, or who at least is not able to persuade the people that he is, a 'brick'. If, in addition to that qualification, he has Lord Shaftesbury's philanthropy, Lord Palmerston's skill, and Sir Henry Maine's political wisdom, so much the better. The people like their brick best when it is made of good clay. But that it should be a brick is their *sine qua non*, their final test, their only reasonable or unreasonable ground for presuming that it is good for their purposes. It is not the peculiar qualities of Mr. Gladstone, for example ; not his profound humility ; not his tender sympathies with his Fenian 'flesh and blood' ; not his boundless humanity, which remembers Mitchelstown, and sends a great army to vain graves, when to do so may improve

his chance of helping humanity by securing his success at the next election; not his incomparable power of saying or implying the thing which is not. It is his courage: the courage which dared to make a total revolution in the constitution of the army by a stroke of his pen, in the face of the will of Parliament; which proposed and carried an Irish Coercion Bill that, among other decrees worthy of Louis XIV, revived the powers of *lettres de cachet* and of arbitrary imprisonment, supposed to have fallen for ever with the Bastille; which did fifty other things that Lord Salisbury or Lord Hartington would have turned pale at the thought of; and which, now that he is down on his back, bites, kicks, spits, and smiles, and will not own for a moment to being beaten: this it is which made him for so many years the supreme favourite of the people, and has been so nearly elevating him to the dignity of the Danton of an English revolution.

The popularity of parties will henceforward be built upon the same foundation as that of individuals. The Conservatives must look to this. Courage is by no means the quality by which they have been most distinguished since the death of Lord Palmerston, the last man on their side who was 'brick' enough to oppose bullies and braggarts with bold justice instead of craven 'conciliation'. Which of the 'honest' party since him would have had the sense and courage to perceive that an American 'difficulty', which threatened to bring dishonour if not ultimate disaster upon the country, could be dispersed in an instant, with increase of goodwill between all parties, by simply putting ten thousand men into Canadian

transports and disembarking them again. Disraeli had, indeed, many of the qualities required by a popular leader; but he had not the courage to throw up place rather than disembowel his Reform Bill of all that distinguished it from the Bill of the preceding Ministry, the principles of which he was called to the head of Government expressly to oppose. Had the Conservatives, during the last twenty-five years, shown themselves above being frightened by a temporary loss of office, they would now, almost beyond doubt, have been in a strong and independent majority, with no necessity for adopting pillage as a principle. But when the pinch has come they have, of late years, always thrown over principle and shown themselves ready to purchase a continuance of place by measures in excess of the most revolutionary proposals of their adversaries. Almost all the Radical measures of this period have been passed directly by or through the connivance of frightened Conservatives; and there cannot be the least doubt that, had they never during this time been in office or had any chance of forming anything more than a fairly strong Opposition, the residue of Conservative feeling in the Liberal party—which has more than once been shocked by the Radical extravagances of the Tories—would have saved the country from a great deal of the 'progress' which has brought us to the pass we are now in.

The failure of courage in the Conservative party has been followed by failure of insight and intellectual ability. Men lose the power of seeing the truth when they drop the custom of obeying it—that is to say, when they cease to be ready, if called upon, to make personal sacrifices for it. The habit of courage, once

lost, is very hard of recovery, and the loss of a reputation for it is still more difficult to overcome. But perhaps it is not altogether too late for the party so to imitate pluck as to persuade the multitude of voters, who easily take signs for proofs, that they possess it. Let the Tories think how often they have knuckled under to an angry adversary, and discovered immediately afterwards that 'if they had but looked big and spit at him, he'd have run'. Let them practice at first those small achievements of prowess in which there is really no danger at all, but only the necessity of fronting a nerve-shaking noise of gongs and kettle-drums. Let them 'look big', and even do big things, in which reflection assures their terrified sensations that there is no real peril to their places, until at last, perhaps, they begin again to feel big. Let them study a little more closely those whom they have made their masters, and who like nothing so much as a 'boom'. Considering how much character for courage the party has to recover, they could not, for example, do better for themselves than spend a good sum on our model army and navy, which the people persist in considering utterly inadequate. Let them not potter about the amount. There might be a serious show of opposition to the additional expenditure of one million, but a vote of ten or twelve would throw the whole nation into a state of enthusiasm, and would go a long way towards obtaining for Ministers the altogether priceless reputation of 'bricks'. Lord Randolph Churchill might make himself very disagreeable were the question one of adding a thousand men to the army and another ironclad to the fleet; but his voice would not be heard in the shouts of applause

which would welcome a credit for 20,000 more men and half a score of new ships. And not only would a waste of money so trifling in comparison with the reputation of a great party be a joy to the people and the removal of the thousand difficulties that beset the way of a Government justly suspected of want of heart, but the very fact of having dared to 'look big' would give them heart; and they might again learn to face, for honour and patriotism, the reality of risk, and become worthy to govern in times when real and enormous risks have either to be faced or ruinously ignored. For the further encouragement of the party which dares not believe in the virtue 'that all alone is hugely politic', let it be considered that, for a statesman who should unite high ability with imagination enough to understand a very ignorant but not ignoble nor inscrutable people, there is no inherent impossibility of combining the honour and patriotism of a Burke or Pitt with the popularity of a Gladstone or a Boulanger. The people would like the real best better than the sham, if they could only see it; but they cannot see how manifest cowardice and dread beyond all things of personal risk or loss can be the panoply of honour and patriotism. They talk a great deal about rights and equality; but in their hearts they do not care a straw for them in comparison with the pleasure of being handsomely and courageously governed.

If the Conservatives have not the wit to assume the virtue of courage though they have it not, and so to use their remaining term of office as to recover some part of their fearfully damaged reputation for pluck, the country will fall once more under the one-man

government from which we have been, for a time, so marvellously delivered. They know well what bold, capable, and watchful ambitions are awaiting the opportunity, and may guess pretty well how the dearest of their professed interests would fare under the régime that must follow their own dereliction of duty.

MINDING ONE'S OWN BUSINESS

[*St. James's Gazette*, April 21, 1886.]

To know one's own business, with quiet persistence to forward it, and to mind nothing else: that is the true way to carry on the work of life. This sounds like a truism; yet few really acknowledge it, even in principle. It is not often that even the first step—that of knowing what one's business is—is conscientiously taken; and it must be allowed that, with many, there are intellectual as well as moral difficulties in the way of this first step. The easiest mode of getting rid of the intellectual difficulty is for a man to ask himself what is not his business; and many a well-disposed person may be surprised to find, on requiring a strict reply from his understanding, that he has been in the habit of considering it a virtue to waste time, thought, feeling, and other means that have been given him for the better doing of his own business, on interests which truly are no business of his at all. He may have to confess that he is constantly wasting sympathy—that mainspring of social serviceableness—upon sorrows and evils which it cannot remove or alleviate. Ills, either in his own condition

or in that of others, which his conduct cannot affect, are really no business of his; and the man who minds his own business will do all in his power to subdue his anxieties and sorrows for his own greatest fears or misfortunes, or those of his dearest friend, if there lies no help in his own hands. Sympathy which does not mean action of some sort is not much of a virtue in any man; while in those humane persons who habitually indulge in sympathy for its own sake, it is apt to become a nauseous and vicious effeminacy.

There never was a time in which this simple and obvious duty of minding one's own business has been more generally neglected than the present. Charity—which was anciently understood to consist in first securing the true interests of self, and then attending to those of the neighbour, and thence extending, according to its opportunities, to the nation, and vanishing in the cosmopolitan circumference—tends now to begin and end in the circumference: the interests of nation, neighbour, and self being regarded as matters of meritorious sacrifice in honour of that vague abstraction, universal beneficence. The simpleton who does not love himself well enough to confer upon that individual the first blessing of self-government—the head of a family who has not mind and character enough to order his own household with justice and affection—comforts his conscience by thinking that he has at least the shoulders of an Atlas for the burthens of the world; and, flying from his refractory self and ungovernable private affairs, he takes his place, unquestioned by himself or others, among the guides and guardians of mankind in general.

In proportion to a man's good sense will be his

readiness to confess that his sphere of direct and real usefulness—which is his business—is, as a rule, extremely limited. The old-fashioned limitation of usefulness, that of neighbourhood, is a sound one. A kind act done—a five-pound note given to help a person of one's own acquaintance—may be tolerably sure of its reward : success. Whereas the probability is that ten times the amount of self-sacrifice or expense would be worse than cast away upon those who were not, in the simple sense, the ' neighbours ' of the would-be benefactor.

In quiet times, and under an ordinarily good Government, politics can only be the business of a very few. . . . On the other hand, there are times when an ardent and active interest in politics may be the business of every man who has any feeling for his own dearest interests and those of his neighbour. There are political conditions, sometimes becoming chronic, which are substantially conditions of civil war and under which for a good man to shut himself up within the more congenial interests of his own immediate surroundings is a neglect of his own business. . . . Civil war can be waged by words as well as by swords ; and in such conditions a man who refuses to take up the arms which are in fashion, should he be able to find or make any opportunity of wielding them with effect, is just as much a ' funk ' as one who sits still and sees his house sacked and his family insulted while he has any hope of being able to defend them. The conditions are usually easily discernible under which political action becomes every good man's duty. There can be no mistake about them, for instance, when a large and powerful party, with an envious and ignorant mob at its heels,

openly treats the Decalogue as a 'foreign law' to which it cannot be expected that the 'people' should profess fealty. Let no just man underrate his strength or mistake his business at such a time.

> When phrases are in power
> And hearts alone have leave to bleed,
> Speak; for a good word then is a good deed.

CALLING A SPADE A SPADE

[*St. James's Gazette*, April 27, 1886.]

In the matter of calling a spade a spade there are four points worth considering: the moral and intellectual difficulty which nearly all persons find when they attempt it; its ordinary inexpediency; its sometime necessity; and, lastly, the question whether it can ever be right to call a spade a shovel, with that prefix which the British navvy, in the chronic emphasis of his sanguineous temperament, usually attaches to it?

Many a man there is who cannot look another in the face; there are few men who can look facts, even simple ones, in the face, as is proved by the almost invariably unveracious manner in which they name them when called upon to do so. The faculty of naming things rightly is, in truth, genius: great genius when the things named are delicate and elaborate; and genius of a lower and lower order, but still genius, according as they are simpler and more superficial. Cobbett and Carlyle were notable namers of things in the lower order: and such men have commonly an immense and immediate influence, and

almost entirely for good. For they seldom try to name things they cannot see; and when they do so the mistake is usually manifest—as when Carlyle described Newman as having 'no more brain than a rabbit'. On the other hand, the highest and most varied culture and 'talents' will not enable a man to call a spade a spade unless he has the natural faculty of distinguishing it from a spud or a mattock. Such culture and talents may, indeed, enable him, while continually failing to *say* the thing, to talk with such a wonderful display of words *about* it, that the addle-headed and habitually unveracious—which are the 'many', whether they live in Belgravia or Bethnal-green—take this 'glamour' for something a great deal better and wiser than reality. As the leaders are, so are the led. The world is divided into two sets: one of which, by far the most numerous, talks about things; the other, called 'sensible men', either say things, or, not having that faculty, hold their tongues.

As to the ordinary inexpediency of calling things by their exact names, it is obvious that, as between moral and political adversaries, it implies war *à outrance*, and should therefore be reserved for rare crises. A fool should not be called a fool to his face unless it seems the only probable means of converting him, and not then unless his conversion is of consequence; and, in speaking of him in his absence, it is not only more mannerly, but it is also an economy of force, to express the fact inferentially, under ordinary circumstances. The art of naming things inferentially was carried to the highest pitch in the high society and diplomacy of two or three generations ago. But the edge of this instrument is now beginning to be thought too fine

for use; and the greatest living diplomatist is in the habit of calling spades spades, without extenuation, exaggeration, or remorse, though not without economy. High society also is becoming much more plain-spoken: probably because it has become much less 'high', and has admitted the necessity of accommodating its speech to the understanding of the strange bedfellows which political and monetary considerations make more and more familiar with it. Reticence, more or less approximate statement, and inferential assertion must be measured by and varied according to the character and capacity of the audience; but they are, at almost all times, among the first conditions of truly persuasive speech, and to insist upon truth without some degree of such control of tongue or pen is to burn powder in a dish instead of a gun-barrel. From the Greek tragedian who speaks of the wrath of God as being slow 'but in the end not weak', to the Sussex hind who says 'a good few' when he means a good many, there is instinctive action upon this rule of expression among all sober-minded persons; and the extraordinary force of a first-class political speaker or writer—Sir Henry Maine, for example—often depends almost as much upon his steady understatement of his facts and views as upon the novelty and importance of the facts and views themselves. The reason mainly is, that, whereas the full assertion of a fact or truth tends to leave the hearer or reader a comparatively passive recipient, its literal and obvious understatement excites him to fill up in his own mind the measure of assertion and emphasis, and to render him thus an active party to it, making him feel that the thought is half his own and that he has

a personal interest in confessing and promulgating it. A great advantage—and here we come to our third point—resulting from habits of reticence and understatement is, that, when the rare necessity for strong language arrives, the literal unexaggerated expression of the truth falls like a bombshell; and many is the time that a hitherto unmoved multitude has said to itself, 'There must be something in it when So-and-so calls a spade a spade!'

Finally, can there ever be any justification for, or even proximate expediency in, calling a spade out of its name in the emphatic manner alluded to in the beginning of this article? Though we have abundant authority in the practice of popular statesmen and orators of the present day in favour of such modes of expression, we are confident that they are neither right nor useful. It is neither right nor useful, for example, to call men of proved truth and patriotism liars and self-seekers; and such ways of enforcing popular interests will, we trust, in due time become as obsolete as 'foetidissimus porcus', 'bug', or other such vague and inexact descriptions as theologians and members of Parliament used in former days to give of their opponents. In the extremest cases, among persons accustomed to the ordinary decencies of reserve in speech, the exactly true expression is the strongest; and to call a man who is guilty of subornation of perjury, or of treason, a suborner of perjury or a traitor is quite enough.

HOW IS IT TO END?

[*St. James's Gazette*, March 23, 1887, with an editorial note: 'We have received the following communication from a distinguished member of the Roman Catholic Church']

WHETHER or not it be true, as reported in the *Débats* of a day or two ago, that Dr. Schlözer, the Prussian Minister to the Vatican, has proposed to the Pope a European Congress for the solution of the Eastern Question, at the head of which Congress should be his Holiness himself, the rumour reminds us of a necessity which is ever becoming more pressing, and of an ultimate possibility which seems less and less remote. There are many signs that the prophecies of those who foretold that the political as well as the ecclesiastical influence of the Pope would be greatly increased by his ceasing to hold rank and rivalry with temporal Princes are likely to be fulfilled. If the world is not in the end either to explode like a bombshell or to become the appanage of a single absolute despot, some means must be found before very long of lessening the risks of war or of stopping them altogether; and the reference by common consent of cases of war to an ultimate umpire, assisted in his decisions by arguments proposed, in open counsel, by the differing parties, seems to be the only conceivable mode of attaining this end.

Of recent years vast and probably abiding changes have come over the spirit and circumstances of the Catholic Church. One Government after another has broken off from its allegiance; and it can scarcely now be said that France, Spain, and Italy are politically

more Catholic than Germany or England. Again, if the nominal Catholics of the former countries are more numerous than those of the latter, the balance is in a very considerable degree redressed by the greater weight, earnestness, and higher culture of the English and German members of the Church; and thus the chief cause of jealousy as to the partiality of the Pope, should he ever be called upon to act as umpire, has been much diminished, and is yearly diminishing. Again, the spirit with which the visible Catholic Church has regarded the rest of the world is even more changed, of late years, than that with which the latter was wont to envisage the former. The irreversible dogmas of the Catholic Church are very few, and of these only a number that can be counted on the fingers of one hand are opposed to those of the mass of other Christians; and these, as they are better understood, are found to be very much less unlike common opinion, and far less powerful for practical mischief, than used to be supposed. For example, one of the only two great dogmas which have been decreed since the Council of Trent—namely, the Immaculate Conception—is beginning to be understood among Protestants as being nothing more nor less than the belief which at least every two non-Catholics out of three hold concerning every infant that is born into the world. Again, the hostility of all other religions to the Catholic Church, which was naturally aroused by the notion that every one not belonging to that Church was believed by it to be lost, is becoming very much allayed by the discovery that by the Catholic Church, in this sense, is meant that invisible body to which the true Catholic of the

visible Church holds that every Christian belongs who believes and does his duty according to the best light that is in him. A wide acquaintance with Roman Catholics cannot but result in the discovery that, in exact proportion to their opportunities of knowing what is the true mind of their Church on this matter, they are liberal concerning it, and that, as a well-known Jesuit recently said in a sermon at Farm Street, 'There are no theologians so strict as nursery-maids'. Another great obstacle to the sympathetic working together of Catholics and Protestants is being daily removed by their free intercourse, whereby the latter are coming more and more to learn that the former are not much better than themselves. It cannot but soften the most religious tradesman's heart to find that his brother-tradesman, who holds the Catholic faith, will, as a rule, cheat as readily as he will himself; and such differences of opinion as the holding by one party that lying is a venial sin and detracting a mortal one, and, by the other, that the guilt of these actions is exactly the reverse, cease to be injurious to amicable relations when it is observed that Catholics and Protestants as a rule are equally given both to lying and detracting.

While, then, war is rapidly becoming a more and more devastating and intolerable evil, while hosts that count by millions are even now confronting each other with uplifted arms that 'mean no second blow', the world seems to be growing ripe for a solution which has hitherto in its recent history been impossible. It may be a good while yet, and Europe may have to be deluged several times with blood, before the necessity is felt to be hard enough to enforce recourse

in case of quarrel to an umpire; but, when that time comes, who will there be that can be qualified for that position but one? Who will be found sufficiently disencumbered of personal interests and political partialities, and at the same time possessed, by his position, of a guarantee of sufficient knowledge and statesmanship for the post? That his verdict would be infallible, no one, not the supposed umpire himself, would pretend; but in all worldly matters the question, in such cases, is only one of more or less fallibility; men in all conditions select their guides and advisers only on a reasonable presumption of their wisdom; and there are some circumstances in which the acceptance of the verdict of acknowledged unwisdom would be preferable to the alternative mode of settlement.

Should such a method of putting an end to war ever be adopted, its sanction must still be force: since the umpire would not be a Hildebrand exercising an irresistible sway over the conscience of the world, but only a statesman whose authority would rest on the probability of superior impartiality, coolness, and opportunities of knowledge; and his awards could only be carried out by a consensus of nations leagued together to punish any member of the confederation which should refuse to acknowledge his authority. But the force which each nation would need to maintain for this purpose, and to preserve domestic order, would be very different in amount from that universal armament which now drains the world's life more effectually than the chronic wars of olden times drained it. There would be no great difficulty, probably, in maintaining the popularity of such a mode

of settlement, were it once established ; for the arguments brought in council for and against each award would be public, and the umpire's summary of his reasons similar in form and exhaustiveness to those which now accompany the publication of the confirmation of a dogma.

PROVERBS AND BON-MOTS

[*St. James's Gazette*, October 7, 1886.]

When it is considered that every individual of hundreds of generations of mankind has been giving vent to words for a considerable part of each day of his life, it is a matter for some surprise that the outcome, in recorded memorable sayings, should be so very small ; especially as the human race seems at all times to have set considerable value on its wit, as is proved by the fact that collections of its 'good things' have formed a regular department of its literature from the earliest times. Even if we granted that all the sayings recorded in ancient and modern collections were good, they would be surprisingly few in number, when the number of speakers and the innate ambition of men to be witty or wise and to have their wit and wisdom published is remembered ; but the fact is, that, when these hoards of intellectual treasure come to be sifted, the residuum of wit or wisdom which will stand criticism is so small, and the great mass of the material so stupid, flat, and often false and vicious, that the pride we naturally feel in the species to which we belong cannot but suffer a passing shock. The fact is, that we are nearly all of us given

to practise a little delusion upon ourselves in favour of our kind, the cumulative result of many repetitions of which is a quite inordinate estimate of the greatness of humanity in the bulk. We talk of 'such men as' Fénelon, General Gordon, or Newman, as if there now existed or had existed plenty of them, instead of each being a species rather than an individual of a species. In like manner we recite the few really good sayings attributed, say, to Sydney Smith or to the Spartans, and extol the glory of a man or a race in the habit of uttering 'such things'; forgetting that they were not at all in such a habit, and that the dozen or half-dozen prime witticisms instanced constitute the whole recorded sum of their really noteworthy 'mots'.

Collections of proverbs, which are commonly regarded as epitomes of popular wisdom, and collections of witticisms, the charm of which consists in the rapid play of intelligence, are the stupidest and dullest of all dull and stupid reading. This is partly, indeed, the fault of the collectors, who, as a rule, omit what is best. In a modern collection of many thousand proverbs of all nations, we have looked in vain for 'Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien', 'One may live in a house without being an architect', and several others, any one of which is worth an average hundred of those which are recorded by the editor. But, after allowing for shortcomings of collectors, the dismal conclusion must be accepted, that the wit and wisdom of mankind in its proverbs and its talk are but as two needles in ten thousand pottles of hay. There are melancholy proofs, moreover, that the great bulk of mankind prefer the hay to the needles, even when the latter are offered to its choice. A grain of alliteration

goes further to make a proverb than a pound of wisdom or a quiverful of wit. The world will have nothing to say to angels' visits that are 'short and far between', but delights in Campbell's alliterative and nonsensical parody of the old poet's sentence—'few and far between'. It is never tired of its sordid saying 'Honesty is the best policy', but has never heard and would never care to hear of Shakespeare's praise of rectitude, 'which all alone is hugely politic'. A wise saying is the product of sound intelligence contemplating weighty experience; but the experience of average mankind is not weighty, even when it is disastrous, and its intelligence is not sound. Therefore we should not look in popular proverbs for what they cannot and, indeed, do not profess to be. Their name rightly expresses their nature. They are for the most part handy substitutes for arguments, accepted similes that serve instead of reasoning, brief prescriptive and analogical claims for ordinary deeds and judgements; and they consequently reflect the ordinary vices and weaknesses of those who use them, no less than their commonly very moderate ideals of what is good and right.

Of all nations the Scotch are the most addicted to the practice of exposing themselves in proverbs. They seem, if we may judge from collections of their sayings, to have the 'courage of their convictions' in a degree unapproached by any other race. Many a common Englishman, Frenchman, or German might think, and does think, but would never say, such things as the Scotchman will freely utter in his amiable accent and convincing Doric. There is an urgent and 'hard-headed' supremacy of self and 'siller' in many of

his proverbs which goes far to account for the peculiar successes of his race; but, at the same time, there are manifested certain weaknesses of self-esteem, a contempt for kinds of success and merit not his own, that help to explain the way he votes. It is curious that, as the Scotch stand first among the nations as makers of proverbs, their kindred the Irish should come last. In Bohn's collection of proverbs of all nations there are six 'presumed to be Irish' and more than 1,600 unquestionably Scotch. Most proverbs have become the common property of the world, and it is impossible to discriminate between their original nationalities. Such proverbs as are certainly Spanish have often a savour of the national taste and the peculiar capacity of the Spaniards for moral and theological thought. 'Happy's the son whose father went to the devil' and 'Hell is paved with good intentions' are comments upon the ordinary results of good examples and good resolutions which are worthy of the land of Ignatius and Alfonso Rodriguez. Italian popular sayings are sometimes marked by a frank and conscientious craft which at once betrays their origin. But, on the whole, proverbs do not rise above, nor (except in the case of the Scotch) fall below, the average wisdom and morality of mankind; and any respectable person who thinks to grow wiser and better by the study of them will find himself much disappointed.

What Lord Bacon says (surely, on the whole, with doubtfnl truth) about weighty things in general—namely, that they sink in the stream of time, while straws and feathers are borne safely on its surface—is certainly true of the weightiest sayings, remarkable

though they may be for brevity, the 'soul of wit'. The writings of Aristotle and St. Augustine alone contain more wise and pithy sentences on points which concern all men than are to be found in the entire sum of proverbial literature.

OUT-OF-DOOR POETRY

[*St. James's Gazette*, July 9, 1887.]

Scotch criticism, we all know, is nothing if not philosophical; and if it is not the product, as perhaps the best criticism is, of reason glowing with imagination, it may at least be described as the result of logic mitigated by enthusiasm. Professor Veitch's long introductory essay on the feeling for nature and the nature and laws of beauty does not add much to our knowledge of the principles of aesthetics; but it contains many remarks that could only have been made by a man of wholesome taste and considerable acuteness and culture; and many readers, especially among his own compatriots, will be all the more pleased and benefited by them because they are embedded in a philosophical matrix which demands of those who read the essay a good deal more than a state of merely passive receptivity.

English readers, however, will value Professor Veitch's book [1] chiefly because he has, for the first time as far as we know, pointed out and traced throughout the whole course of Scottish poetry a really important and distinguishing character—namely, its

[1] *The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry.* By John Veitch. Two vols. Blackwood, 1887.

'out-of-door' feeling, and its independence of that human significance which English poetry has always striven after more or less, and which culminates in the poetry of Wordsworth; whom Professor Veitch has the magnanimity to pronounce to be the greatest of the poets of nature, though his method is wholly removed from that of the entire race of Scottish bards.

Professor Veitch ascribes the prevailing characteristic of the feeling for nature, displayed by the Scottish poets from the earliest times, to the intolerable climate and imperfect domestic arrangements which render the return of the brief northern summer, with its warmth, greenery, and song of birds, a simple and immense physical delight and relief from the long purgatory of winter in his country. He points out that no Scottish poet of any but quite a modern date shows any feeling, unless it be that of aversion, for the mountains, mosses, and lakes which make up the mass of Scottish scenery and form its special recommendation to southerners. On the other hand, he claims, with just pride, for these bards, a joy and a power of expressing their joy in getting out of doors on a fine spring morning, which has not been surpassed by the greatest English singers. William Dunbar, for example, in the fifteenth century, pours out his rapturous welcome to May in words which are fully worthy of Chaucer:

> For mirth of May, wyth skippis and wyth hoppis,
> The birdis sang upon the tender croppis,
> With curiouse note, as Venus chapell clerkis.
> The rosis young, new spredding of their knoppis,
> War powderit brycht with hevinly beriall droppis,
> Throu bemes rede, birnyng as ruby sperkis;
> The skyes rang for schoutyng of the larkis.

There is a vast quantity of this sort of description in the hundred and ten Scottish poets made by Professor Veitch to bear testimony to his main proposition; but it would, perhaps, have been expecting too much of the Professor's patriotism had we looked for a confession of the fact that in all this choir of song there are almost as few notes as there are in the woodland concert of birds in spring. These poets seem to have liked a phrase or an image all the better for its having been used a dozen times before. For example, the 'Venus chapell clerkis' and the 'schoutyng of the larkis' are sentences which seem to have formed part of a common poetical stock which all might use without any idea of plagiarism. They are repeated several times, even within the narrow limits of Professor Veitch's extracts; and it would probably be as impossible to ascertain the originator of the truly splendid line with which the above stanza concludes as it would be to trace the ancient and obscure cabman or bargee the wit and vigour of whose sayings are faithfully transmitted by his successors, to the admiration and astonishment of such modern hearers as have not had opportunities of discovering that the particular witticism or emphatic turn of expression is a precious tradition rather than a direct inspiration.

There is little or no imaginative synthesis in the feeling for nature shown by the Scottish poets. They are so glad to get into the open air, after a long winter in a mud hut or a damp stone tower filled with peat-smoke, that the simple names of objects which remind them of summer are poetry in themselves; and it only needs, in order to produce a new

poem, that sunshine, roses, leaves, grass, lark, mavis, cuckoo, and suchlike words shall be shaken together and turned out in a new order. It is true that there has been in all ages a great deal of English poetry, and that good in its kind, which is of the same simple and childlike sort as this; but at all times, also, the greater English poets have seen nature in a far nobler way—namely, that which discovers and reveals an imaginative unity of human expression in the multitude of external objects. The synthetic eye, which is the highest and rarest faculty of the artist, is almost one and the same thing with what is called poetic imagination, and is the source of all artistic beauty. The heather is not much and the rock is not much; but the heather and the rock, discerned in their living expressional relationship by the poetic eye, are very much indeed—a beauty which is living with the life of man, and therefore inexhaustible. The greater the number of objects that are taken in at once by the poet's or artist's eye, the greater the beauty; but true poets and artists know that this power of visual synthesis can only be exercised, in the present state of our faculties, in a very limited way; hence there is generally, in the landscapes and descriptions of real genius, a great simplicity in and apparent jealousy of their subjects, strikingly in contrast with the works of those who fancy that they are describing when they are only cataloguing. This power of seeing things in their living relationships, which constitutes genius, is rather a virtue than a talent; and the general intuition that it is so is perhaps the reason why so many departures from the common code are condoned in men of

great genius—much being pardoned to those who have much loved. The condition of their vision is an interior simplicity and an immediate and absolute faith—the rarest of all kinds of faith—in what they see, which comes of the survival of a childlike mental innocence and affection. The mass of mankind, after their infancy, see little or nothing of the reality and beauty of things, because they believe only in what their understanding teaches them to expect to see or to think they ought to see and, when seen, to comprehend; whereas reality and beauty are always unforeseeable, surprising, and more or less unaccountable. Simply to believe the witness of their own eyes is what few men ever dream of, unless such witness happens to have the testimony of common consent. There is, perhaps, more of the innocent vision of ripe genius in English poetry than in all other poetry, ancient and modern, put together; and this confers upon English poetry a rhythmical excellence which is not only scarcely ever found in the poetry of any other modern people, but which no other modern people seem to have faculties to comprehend. This music is moved by the particular mood of feeling which is awakened by each particular perception of things in their living relations to each other. The 'symbolical' character of English descriptive poetry, upon which Professor Veitch insists, especially in the case of Wordsworth, means nothing, as far as we can understand the term, but the conjunction of the object or group of objects of nature with the particular moods which they are calculated to awaken in the sensitive and innocent soul. When we inquire why such objects or groups

of objects are calculated to awaken such moods, we get into a region which philosophy has not yet thrown much light upon. That any natural object should, in such minds, awaken some particular mood might be explained by known principles of association of ideas, were the mood different in each spectator; but all such art is based upon the assumption, which is found in practice to be true, that all men capable of being impressed by such objects will be impressed by them more or less in the same way. No two true poets or painters would ever differ concerning the 'expression' or correspondent mood of any picturesque or poetical collocation of objects; and yet the most philosophical poet or painter might find himself at a loss to give to himself or another any intelligible *rationale* of such correspondence.

DECEMBER IN GARDEN AND FIELD

[*St. James's Gazette*, December 14, 1886.]

To the close observation which is given by a love of nature, the year is never dead. The blessing of Ceres—

> Spring come to you, at the farthest,
> In the very end of harvest—

is fulfilled to those who do not despise or overlook the 'small things' which make up the greater part of the joy of a natural life. The old year does not sink into its grave until it has seen the new year smiling in its lap. Even before autumn has fairly set in, the buds of next year's blossom are large and full upon the rhododendron and the azalea; and if at

this time you break them open, you discover all the parts of the flower which far-off June is to divulge, not only perfectly formed but distinctly touched with colour. The flower of the tall white lily is no sooner dropped than the roots put forth their full complement of new leaves for the summer after that which is not yet ended. The buds of the horse-chestnut are black and viscous, and as big as hazel-nuts, almost before the first winter storm has blown away the last rusty leaf; and there is scarcely a tree or shrub the withering leaf of which does not hold in its armpit a little knob, black, brown, red, or green, which is the infant form of the new spray. The laurustinus, arbutus, and gorse will even yield their full blossom in winter; and the yucca mostly chooses the time of the first snow to surprise the eye with the sudden apparition of its great flower-spear, clothed with tender pink scales. The primrose in December sends up a crop of little sturdy crimped leaves from the midst of the large, lank, and prostrated growth of the past summer; three or four mild days will be too much for the patience of the next year's blossoms themselves; and a touch of tenderest perfume and blue, from the snail-eaten violet-bed, will come to you with a pathos and sweetness such as May and June know nothing of.

At this season the overgrown bedding plants have probably been blackened and struck down by frost, and their mortal remains, not yet removed to the rubbish-heap, hide that which is liveliest in the December life of the garden. When these have been rooted up or cut away, and the paths swept for the last time this year, you may still miss the prettiest points of the baby spring, unless your eyes are very sharp, or

you condescend to stoop down to examine the black and seemingly bare mould. On doing this, however, you detect, in one place, two or three greenish-yellow points, like beaks of some hard-billed bird: these are tulips. In another spot the jonquil has broken earth with its split spear-head, and is already two or three inches above ground. In another, if you look very close, you will see scores of whitish tusks rising out of brown sheaths: these are lilies of the valley. And in a fourth you will find the heads of minute sheaves of green blades, which are as yet glued together at the top: these are crocuses. Not one of these exciting spectacles will you discover until the middle or end of February, unless you look for them; but, however careless your glance, you will hardly fail to see the peony pushing up next year's plant, like the point of a large furnace poker, amidst the black ruin of its last year's leafage; or the infant rhubarb's lurid nose, as conspicuous as Bardolph's, thrust into upper air for breathing.

The sunward banks of lanes are as full of new life as the garden, though here also you must look for it, as indeed you must for all that is best worth seeing in all seasons and places. It is the great time for curious mosses, which the summer has either concealed or not sufficiently supplied with moisture. These require very close looking after, and very well repay the trouble. They grow in little forests of ardent and various life, in strange forms of glowing ridge, and gold and silver cup, and starry leafage proper to themselves. Above them the hazel is already covered with catkins, which are for the most part like little hard brown worms; but here and there, in a very sheltered spot and after

a mild week or so, the little hard brown worm has developed into a large woolly one, and hangs amorously above its bride, whose crimson stigmas blush below from joints of the same twig, on which as yet is no appearance of a leaf. The willow is everywhere in large bud ; and, under lucky conditions, it has flowered like a gosling just out of its egg. The next year's wheat harvest is three or four inches high, and will be glad of a snow coverlet, though able to do without it ; and the clover that was sown with the oats, and did not look as if it would come to much, is now in its liveliest green. Under the mould you will find, if you are fond of digging, that everything is busier than above. The roots of all things are taking advantage of the nice cool weather to do their heaviest work, swelling and making new fibres incessantly, unless actually caked about with frost.

It is only the inveterate cockney who fancies that the life of the year begins somewhere about the end of February or the beginning of March. Of all times of the year Nature—never dead—is never so nearly dead as then. The east wind then absolutely checks all above-ground growth, which quiet cold—not amounting to hard congelation—scarcely interferes with at all.

OLD COACH ROADS

[*St. James's Gazette*, October 5, 1886.]

The railway is very far from being, in the main, so great an enemy to rural beauty and retirement as we are most of us disposed to consider it. It has destroyed, indeed, the grace and tranquillity of many

an old town and village. Many an ancient 'High Street', whose red-tiled roofs, half-timbered walls, and brick pavements used not long ago to slumber in the hot noon, with scarcely a sign of an inhabitant, has become the busy and incongruous main thoroughfare of an otherwise brand-new town, of which the 'inns' are 'hotels', the rows of new six or eight-roomed edifices, 'Inkermann', 'Alma', 'Gladstone', or 'Hartington' houses, and the labourers' cottages 'villas', the sordid material of which is hidden and rendered impervious to rain by stucco facings, after Palladio or Brunelleschi. Nearly all the pleasant old towns and villages which lie within twenty-five miles of London, and which have been accommodated with railway stations, have undergone this change; as also have many of those which are at a much greater distance from the capital, and which first acquired the distinction of being stopped at by the trains of the great original lines. But as railway stations have become multiplied all over the country they have proportionately ceased to become centres of attraction, there being only a certain amount of population to attract; and a new station now has little influence upon its neighbourhood, particularly when, as is commonly the case, the towns or villages and the stations are a mile or so apart.

The lovers of country solitude and peace are well compensated for the damage which so many sequestered spots have suffered from railways, by the extra solitude and peace which many more localities have gained by the drainage of population to the railway towns; and although the near passage of a line of railway carriages is a horror to the eye, the distant

view of a train, winding, like a many-jointed worm, through the valleys and across the plains, and setting its long track of white breath against the green woods and pastures, is a distinct and great gain to the landscape—an addition which, in a wide prospect, is scarcely less beautiful than those supreme elements of the picturesque, the winding river or the long arched aqueduct or viaduct; which latter itself is often an outcome of the railway, and is the making of more than one famous landscape: such as that of the Weald of Kent as seen from the coach road between Southborough and Tonbridge. In fact, Nature has assimilated the railway; and great beauties have, as usual, asserted in this case also their kinship with great uses. Even the railway's ill-favoured sister, the electric telegraph, makes no mean amends for its hideous presence along so many green road-sides by the aeolian airs it gives forth in the lightest breeze; and it is to be hoped that, as we get used to them, the inherent ugliness of these endless files of black posts bound together by sagging wires will disturb the serenity of our country walks no more than the tranquillity of the swallows (who at this time of year congregate along the wires, with their heads all looking one way, to talk about their flight southwards) is troubled by the hasty and excited messages which are incessantly flashing beneath their toes. When, however, all is said that can be said for the electric telegraph in its artistic aspects, I cannot but think that its ugliness is too great to be tolerated by man or nature, and that ere long it will be found out that this skeleton may be safely and advantageously buried in the earth whose face it now deforms; and deforms, if possible, the

more for the consciousness we have of the mystic life which is always flying through its motionless frame with the speed of spirit.

The greatest gain for which the lover of the country has to thank the railways is the transfer which has been made by them of the old coach roads from the purposes of prose and business to those of poetry and pleasure. While business-men—including the restless multitudes who make their pleasures business, seeking rather to lose themselves in change of agitation than to renew their lives in leisure and repose—are hurried along the flattest and dullest lines of transit that can be chosen, at a rate and with noise and shaking which prevent their seeing anything when anything is to be seen, the true lover of the country remains in undisputed possession of thousands of miles of fine roads, so beautiful, solitary, and strangely haunted by hints of a past time, that the quiet traveller in phaeton, or on foot, horse, or bicycle, seems to find himself in a sort of endless faëry-land laid out with lavish art and labour for the sole satisfaction of his pleasant idleness. He may drive, ride, or walk ten miles on one of these noble causeways and never meet or pass even a cart or a drove of cattle. The old posting towns and villages at which he rests are filled with an almost supernatural quiet; and each has one or more spacious inns which are at his solitary disposal, as is the great range of stabling at that of his cob, if he has one. The dreamy dwellers in these places seem mostly to have forgotten whither the great roads which traverse them lead. I paused the other day where a main road forked, to ask where the road on the right hand led to; and the pretty and innocent-looking young

woman of whom I made the inquiry answered, 'To the beer-shop, sir.' A tender melancholy is the 'sauce piquante' of beauty; and this feeling lingers everywhere about these roads and their inhabitants; to this feeling, in the posting stations especially, the rude and prosperous merriment of past days has given place. Of real decay and of poverty amounting to hardship they somehow show no signs; though it is sometimes difficult to understand how this is. Hurst Green, for example, which is the old posting station between Tunbridge Wells and Hastings, is little more than an assemblage of large inns, spacious stable-yards, and smithies; but though everything is as quiet as a trance, all the inns and smithies are open, and stand contentedly waiting for the guest, the horse, or the job which never seems to come. A ham and a cold fowl or surloin will probably be forthcoming from the larder of 'The George' at your demand for luncheon, and you will find no savour of antiquity about them; and the ostler will promptly appear at the sound of your horse's hoofs in the yard, and will take him from you with as much *nonchalance* as if the advent of a traveller were a common occurrence.

These roads generally follow the most picturesque tracts of country, as the railways take the dullest. If there is a long ridge of hill anywhere, from which the beauties of half a dozen counties can be seen at once, the road will go out of its way to run along the top of it, and no valley is too deep to be dived into for a sight of its river or moated house. Everything about an old road is human and civilized. The adjacent timber has been planted, ages ago, with reference to it; farmhouses, hamlets, and gentlemen's mansions

cherish its companionship : whereas the railway darts from one dull station to another through tracts of absolute desert ; and if it happens to come upon a piece of country sufficiently sensational to attract the suffering traveller's notice, it will probably dive under it like a mole before he can say ' Look ! '

The desertion of these roads by their ancient traffic has given their now seldom wayfarers a personal interest in each other. Rencontres between pedestrians in these solitudes seem to justify and even call for mutual recognition and a word or two about the weather. If a lonely cavalier, cyclist, or walker is passed by a bright barouche full of ladies from the neighbouring ' Place ', he continues his journey with a sense of having been in contact with the ' quality ' ; and should you see a young lady on foot and pushing her tricycle up a hill a mile long, with her brother or lover a furlong ahead—as he frequently is in such cases—you may offer your services without danger of being thought rude, except by the gentleman who has forfeited his right to interfere. It is curious that the old coach roads are commonly much better kept up now that their uses are for the most part poetical than they were when they were the arteries of the country's busy life. I can remember posting from Tunbridge Wells to Hastings before there was any railway, and when the turnpike charges formed nearly half of the cost of so travelling. The roads were, for the most part, beds of loose sand six or eight inches deep, and it was killing work for the horses. The other day I drove the whole distance easily in three hours and a half, excluding luncheon time at Hurst Green, over roads which were throughout as smooth and sound as those of a royal park.

A SAFE CHARITY

[*St. James's Gazette*, August 27, 1887.]

Those who have the best means and the best intentions of rendering help to the poor best know what a heartless and almost impossible task the endeavour commonly proves. Most direct forms of private charity are simply forms of relieving the rates in a manner which is probably extravagant in itself and disproportionate to the donor's means: hundreds of thousands of pounds are annually subscribed to 'institutions' by which the 'secretaries', 'matrons', and other functionaries are chiefly benefited, and, perhaps, were chiefly intended by their founders to be benefited; a private 'dispensary', for example, receiving subscriptions of about £300 a year having been known to present in its annual balance-sheet the sum of £2 17*s.* for medicines dispensed, the rest of the income having been absorbed by its house officers and printing expenses. The really poor are seldom those who participate most largely in private charities; which often go to add to the idleness, luxury, and sullen discontent of persons who regard such assistance as disguised 'ransom' and a practical confession that they have a 'right' to much more than is thus given; and the just and redeeming punishments of vice and imprudence are interfered with far oftener than unmerited misery is assisted and consoled by them. As a rule, the necessities of each class are best understood and best helped by itself; the rich helping the 'poor rich', and the poor the poorest poor, in such cases as are not adequately

provided for by the law. Idleness, humiliation, hypocrisy, and ingratitude are the principal fruits which the rich man sows by the more or less indiscriminate dispersion of guineas, which is the commonest form of 'charity'. But there is a form of charity which the rich and well-to-do and well-disposed can indulge in without any of the dangers and drawbacks of ordinary almsgiving: if it is forbidden to them to help the really poor very effectually in their material necessities, they can help them in a far more effectual way; they can minister to their neglected spiritual necessities by giving them *pleasure*, which, for the most part, the poor are curiously ignorant of the modes of obtaining, even when they possess the necessary money-means. Suffering and pleasure are the conditions of the soul's progressive life. Suffering is distributed among all classes pretty evenly—at all events, much more evenly than pleasure. The manners, faces, and voices of the poor of English towns do not express suffering from privation of ordinary necessities so much as a sordid ignorance of delight. The words of the Prophet may be well used of England in the present time: 'The nation hast Thou multiplied, but Thou hast not increased the joy.' Now, the actual necessaries of life being provided for—and very few indeed are really without a sufficiency of these—joy has very little to do with money. Mud-pies, which every poor man's child can have gratis, are as productive of pleasure as the twenty-guinea dolls' houses of the offspring of the millionaire. The difference lies chiefly in a difference of average culture, which does not consist in schooling or want of schooling so much as in a superior or inferior knowledge of what are the causes of salutary

pleasure, among the very highest of which is a frequent contact, especially in early youth, with the simple beauty of nature. The sights and sounds of the country fit into the perceptions and desires of the soul, in unvitiated youth, as aptly as the teeth of a pair of cog-wheels. It is not so with those who have grown up in a town-life without any of the unconscious culture of nature in their childhood. There are few things more depressing than to observe the behaviour of the living cargo of a great Clyde steamer as it makes its way from Glasgow through a hundred miles of the most beautiful country in the world, or that of the contents of a large London excursion train when they have been shot down on to the seashore at Brighton or Hastings. Scarcely an eye is turned upon mountain or ocean. To say that these people *s'amusent tristement* would be saying too much for them. The beauty and grandeur which lies about them carries no rebuke of their sordid dullness that might make them sad. They do not even look at it; but seem to be thinking hopefully of the dinner they are about to eat or laboriously of that which they have eaten, and looking as if they would be rather glad than otherwise when the task of perambulating the deck or parade should come to an end and the gloomy festivity be over.

With children it is far otherwise. They have the open spiritual eye: the 'light which lighteth all men' has not yet been quenched by vices, selfishness, and sordid thoughts; they have still the 'grace divine' by which, as Wordsworth says, 'O Nature, we are thine'; and they are capable of those primary perceptions which are knowledge indeed—knowledge which the heart never forgets though it may possibly

fade altogether from the external memory, knowledge a momentary glimpse of which may benefit them more than a year's handling of the dry bones which are offered by school boards to the famished little innocents under that sacred name. Knowledge of nature, received by the imaginative eye of childhood, confers, as far as it goes, an indelible character. It is a change of state, a piece of real 'information', in contradistinction to that absurd *lucus a non lucendo*—the 'information' which only reaches what is most external, or which, indeed, rather does not reach either intellect, heart, or senses, being merely verbal.

The soul, in so far as it is not a mere *tabula rasa*, is, in fact, the sum of its states of real perception; and early childhood is, with most persons, almost the only season of their lives in which they are capable of such perception; and, whether or no the theologians are right in saying that the felicity of eternal life depends upon the number and vividness of such states as are induced upon our present existence, it is certain that the felicity and well-being of the whole of our natural lives is influenced far more powerfully than is commonly supposed by the experiences of infancy and very early youth. Such experience is the foundation of all other teaching that is worth the name. Even religious teaching can be of no use to those who have not the ground of experience which is also the ground of hope. The things which are unseen can, we are told, only be known by those which are seen. In vain do preachers

> Talk of marriage-feasting to the man
> Who nothing knows of food but bread of bran.

Faith, we know, is 'the substance of things hoped for; the being evident of things unseen'. But the

substance and evidence of divine love and sweetness cannot exist where there has been no knowledge of natural love and sweetness. Heaven has fortunately provided that very few children indeed are so unhappy as to have had no experience and innocent reciprocation of the bliss of maternal and paternal love. This one supreme good can hardly have been wholly wanting in any life; and the memory of one minute's experience of it is enough to redeem from utter darkness the whole remainder of a man's natural existence, and perhaps, after lying buried out of sight for many years in his earthliness, to prove the seed of an immortal hope. But every one who has reflected upon his childhood knows that, after this primary experience of infancy, there is no source of pure and innocent joy to be compared with certain days, or hours, or haply only minutes, of vivid communion with external nature. Such communions, however few and brief they may have been, may prove infinitely fruitful. A child under seven years of age is generally a silent poet; and Mr. Colvin has well pointed out, in his *Life of Keats*, how small a quantity of the seed of experience, when planted in the early affections and perceptions, may blossom into a wide and lovely paradise of thought and imagination.

The well-to-do are fortunately becoming more and more conscious of the unmixed good they can effect by procuring for children opportunities of intercourse with nature; but very much less is done in this way than might be done, and certainly would be done, were the fact commonly realized that this simple, easy, and comparatively cheap form of charity is probably more blessed in its results than any other form

whatever. A recent *Punch* makes a little Whitechapel boy exclaim, on occasion of a personally conducted excursion to Hampstead Heath, 'Oh, oh, oh what a big sky they've got 'ere, Miss!' Those who widen the sky over the heads and hearts of little children do more good than they know or guess.

THE WORKS OF JOHN MARSTON

[*St. James's Gazette*, May 28, 1887.]

STRANGELY mingled with a pompous vanity, there was in the mind of Marston an almost passionate contempt for his own works. He dedicated the first-fruits of his Muse 'To everlasting oblivion', and, thirty-six years afterwards, ordered 'Oblivioni sacrum' to be written on his grave-stone. 'But', as Mr. Bullen says, 'prayers cannot purchase oblivion; and the rugged Timon of the Elizabethan drama, who sought to shroud himself "in the uncomfortable night of nothing", will be forced from time to time to emerge from the shades and pass before the eyes of curious scholars.' Charles Lamb, in his specimens, has preserved very nearly all that any but a 'curious' scholar will ever care to read of this dramatist. Of nearly every one of the other 'old dramatists' there exist pieces which an ordinary scholar may read without being guilty of much waste of time; but, with the exception of a few scenes and passages—of which the only one approaching greatness is the short prologue to *Antonio's Revenge*—the interest of Marston's dramas is antiquarian, and valuable chiefly for the accidental lights cast by them upon the works of greater writers,

especially Shakespeare; of whose manner of writing Marston's, to any reader ignorant of the other members of the great Elizabethan group, would seem like a travesty. But we know that it was not so. The dominating fact to be noted of this school is, that, with the exception of Massinger always, and Beaumont and Fletcher sometimes, they pitched the tragic key at a height which no voice but Shakespeare's could sustain. In their effort to reach the heroic in good and evil, their bad men became criminal lunatics, not men of naturally and greatly evil passions greatly indulged; their good people often literally became fools for goodness' sake; and the grossness of the vulgar, in which Shakespeare finds sources of inexhaustible wit and humour, is almost uniformly revolting. In Marston, for example, we have hundreds of pages of Dame Quickly and Doll Tearsheet's outspoken foulness and still fouler 'double intenders'.

Marston gives expression, in his *Prologues* and elsewhere, to quite a modern devotion to 'Art', contrasting in the strangest way with his actual achievements. It was, no doubt, his consciousness of this contrast which rendered him—if we may judge from his own words—so discontented and unhappy a man, and which drove him to take refuge in another profession (the Church!) after his very brief career as a dramatist. He was right to abandon his hope of shining as an eminent poet in any capacity. His satires and his poem on the subject of Pygmalion—in neither of which he was hindered by the height of the key at which he seemed to think it necessary that the drama should be pitched—are failures no less notable than his tragedies. He had not even an elementary know-

ledge of the verse in which he wrote. Many seeming violations of the simplest laws of metre may probably be accounted for by the extraordinarily corrupt condition of the text, after all that Mr. Bullen and others have been able to do for it; but it is impossible to attribute all such violations to this source. Yet, strange to say, we find here and there among this jungle of bad verse a movement which would have done credit to the greatest metrists. Another equally fatal hindrance to his success as a poet was that entire misapprehension of the nature of 'poetic diction' which brought him justly under the lash of Ben Jonson. It is the privilege only of very great and practised poets to employ, from time to time, an old word in a new sense; and to invent a word is perhaps a stretch of the prerogative of the greatest. But Marston often uses words as mere dabs of colour, without much reference to their sense in the context; and when he cannot find one that happens to be of the right shade for its place in any one of his 'nocturns' in black or brown, he rubs a few letters of the alphabet together and makes a new one.

> The rawish damp of clumsy winter ramps
> The fluent summer's vein

is one of many like specimens of Marston's 'word-painting'; and

> The loathsome stain of king's ingratitude,
> From me O much be far!

and frequent similar 'licences', show how firmly he was convinced that poets are the rulers of grammar rather than its subjects.

In these and most other respects Marston's work

reminds one of a big blustering boy, with the possibility in him of a shapely and sensible giant, but striving to use the giant's strength before he has got it. In one passage only—the Prologue already mentioned—the voice that elsewhere for the most part vainly mumbles and mutters rolls forth through twenty lines or so in as fair and heart-shaking a clap of thunder as ever left Olympus. Occasionally, but very rarely, we find embedded in the coarse and harsh grit of Marston's poetry a thought which is quite Shakespearian in its profundity of observation and in its vigour of expression. It would take, for instance, a little essay to expound to a careless reader the depth of such a line as

> The dews that steep
> Our souls in deepest thoughts are fury and sleep.

While Marston's most crying faults were mercilessly ridiculed by Ben Jonson and other satirists of the time, his claims to the respect of his literary contemporaries seem to have been fully admitted. He was not only, on and off, upon friendly terms with the author of the *Poetaster*, in which he was ridiculed, but he was upon working terms with him, *Eastward Ho* being the joint work of Jonson, Chapman, and Marston.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE [1]

[*St. James's Gazette*, April 1, 1886.]

The *Religio Medici* stands in the front rank of that great school of poetic prose which began with the

[1] Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, *Letter to a Friend*, *&c.*, and *Christian Morals*. Edited by W. A. Greenhill, M.D. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1886.)

seventeenth century and suddenly ended near its close—that is, with the Revolution of 1688. There are few things more striking than the entire change which came over English literature about this date. Modern prose came into the world, full-grown and without any gradation of change, in the flood of political pamphlets of that period. If we remember rightly, there are some thirty thousand of these in the library of the British Museum ; and, of the many thousands we have examined, there are scarcely any that might not have been written at the present day, and as few that could have been written forty years earlier than they were. The prose of the pre-revolutionary period was a fine art. In proportion to the greatness of its writers, it was a continually varying flow of music, which aimed at convincing the feelings as the words themselves the understanding. The best post-revolutionary prose appeals to the understanding alone, and is, as a rule and in proportion to its perfection, an exquisite craft, but no fine art. Several great writers have endeavoured to recur to the old style ; but their attempts have never been truly successful. Modern thought does not seem to have the motive-force to set in flow the magnificent rhythm of the *Ecclesiastical Polity* or the *Speech on the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*, or to build the lofty prose of Taylor or to inspire the wood-notes wild of Isaac Walton. Accordingly, the best prose writing of the past two centuries has been that which has resigned itself with the least reluctance to its inferior sphere ; and we all feel that the strong, sound, and often subtle and delicate word-craft of Swift, Addison, Cowper, Southey, and Newman is a more real and seasonable form of

literature than the imitative fine art of a Kenelm Digby.

The *Religio Medici*, Sir Thomas Browne tells us, was 'composed at leisurable hours for his private exercise and satisfaction', and never would have reached the public but for the necessity of justifying himself from the charge of the authorship of the corrupt piracies which got into print from privately circulated copies of his manuscript. Yet this is his only work which is of much permanent value. His bulky book on *Vulgar Errors* is now almost unreadable, and its best use is to remind us that our advance in knowledge has been as great since its publication as our retrogression in wisdom seems proved to have been by the immense popularity of the *Religio Medici* at the time of its appearance. Besides the piratical editions, eight authorized editions were printed during the writer's lifetime, and it was immediately translated into Latin and many European languages. When we take into account the then population of England and the number of persons who could read, eight editions means a popularity something like that of Martin Tupper; and this was the reception of a book of the highest intellectual and most completely unsectarian character, with nothing catch-penny or sensational about it, and entirely concerned with the noblest interests; a book, moreover, which, by its exquisite moderation, made such violent enemies of extreme parties that its author was stigmatized as an Atheist by Catholics and a Catholic by Atheists. Never was a mind more beautifully balanced between the hateful opposites of apathy and zeal. He shared, however, with Plato, the author of *Coriolanus*, and other persons

of that class, that 'last infirmity of noble minds' —a want of complete sympathy with the 'people' in their aggregate capacity :

I am averse from nothing : my conscience would give me the lye if I should say I absolutely detest or hate any essence but the Devil, or so at least abhor anything, but that we might come to composition. If there be any among those common objects of hatred I do contemn and laugh at, it is that great enemy of Reason, Virtue, and Religion, the Multitude ; that numerous piece of monstrosity which, taken asunder, seem men, and the reasonable creatures of God ; but confused together, make but one great beast, and a monstrosity more prodigious than Hydra. It is no breach of charity to call these Fools ; it is the style all holy writers have afforded them, set down by Solomon in Canonical Scripture, and a point of our Faith to believe so. Neither in the name of Multitude do I onely include the base and minor sort of people ; there is a rabble even amongst the Gentry, a sort of plebeian heads, whose fancy moves with the same wheel as those ; men in the same level with mechanicks, though their fortunes do somewhat guild their infirmities.

Sir Thomas Browne, however, loved peace of mind above all things ; and therefore he contemplates a consoling necessity and an addition to the universal harmony of things even in the discordant *vox* of that queer *Deus*. 'It moves not my spleen to behold the multitude in their proper humours, that is, in their fits of folly and madness ; as well understanding that wisdom is not (thus) prophaned unto the world, and 'tis the priveledge of a few to be vertuous. They that endeavour to abolish vice, destroy also vertue ; for contraries, though they destroy one another, yet are the life of one another.'

There is perhaps no other work of the same extent

(the *Religio Medici* fills only 124 small octavo pages), if we except Bacon's *Essays*, which contains so much wisdom, worldly and unworldly, so exquisitely expressed. The style, indeed, though as artistic as that of Bacon, is much more sweet and easy; and one cannot help fancying that it is such as Shakespeare would have used had he written in prose. Though a late cotemporary of Shakespeare, there is no trace of Browne's having read him, or indeed any other poetry beyond what had been included in his university curriculum. His frequently Shakespearian sweetness, breadth, and philosophical pathos are all his own. 'For the world' (he writes) 'I count it not an Inn, but a Hospital, and a place not to live but to die in. The world that I regard is myself; it is the microcosm of my own frame that I cast my eye on. For the other, I use it but like my Globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation.' Here are a few sentences among many which are worthy of the writer of the *Advancement of Learning*:

When we desire to be informed, 'tis good to contest with men above ourselves; but, to confirm and establish our opinions, 'tis best to argue with judgements below our own.

A man may be in as just possession of truth as of a city, and yet be forced to surrender: 'tis therefore far better to enjoy her with peace than to hazard her in a battle.

I could never hear the Ave-Mary Bell without an elevation; or think it a sufficient warrant, because they erred in one circumstance, for me to err in all, that is, in silence and dumb contempt.

Those have not only depraved understandings, but diseased affections, who cannot enjoy a singularity without a heresie, or be the author of an opinion without they be of a sect also.

It is we that are blind, and not Fortune. . . . 'Tis,

I confess, the common fate of men of singular gifts of mind to be destitute of those of fortune. To wiser desires it is satisfaction enough to deserve, though not to enjoy. . . . Let Providence provide for fools.

Dr. Greenhill, in his handy little edition of Sir Thomas Browne's masterpiece, has left little or nothing to be done by future editors. His work has evidently been a labour of love, and has been executed with the punctilious thoroughness, modesty, and gravity of a scholar.

GOLDSMITH [1]

[*St. James's Gazette*, January 16, 1888.]

GOLDSMITH's praise, though the literary public has welcomed several biographies of him lately by way of apology for not reading him, is seldom or never heard among the critics who have had possession of the reviews and magazines for a good while past, and who have succeeded in dubbing as 'supreme' in poetry a set of writers whose reputations, however sound in the main, will probably have to pay dearly in the near future for their present artificial exaltation. But, fortunately, the literary public who talk and criticize, and the people who read, are, as Wordsworth has pointed out in one of his letters published in the *Memorials of Coleorton*, entirely distinct classes: the latter being, at present, little if at all influenced by criticism, which has ceased to reflect their feelings and to guide their judgements; ceasing, as it has done, to uphold the legitimate and prevailing passions,

[1] *Life of Oliver Goldsmith.* By Austin Dobson. (London: Walter Scott, 1888.)

affections, and interests of universal humanity as the fittest matter for poetry, and substituting for the permanently true, simple, and tender the surprising, meteoric, paradoxical, and 'original' in the sense of the odd and far-fetched, rather than as meaning the old order witnessed to and expanded by new and beautiful individuality.

The literature of the affections, to which the poetry and the immortal novel of Goldsmith belong, is at present despised by the critics, who are all for what is called 'passion'. This, as now commonly understood, is appetite delayed or opposed; or, at best, affection in an acute and more or less disordered state, rather than in its normal condition, in which it constitutes the wholesomeness and joy of life, and the purest, sweetest, and, it may be added, the most difficult theme of verse. Violent, unusual, and disordered feelings can easily be presented in uncommon and striking forms of expression; but it is the greatest triumph of the poet to clothe the comparatively tranquil current of healthy and universally experienced affections in that 'continual slight novelty' of language which the greatest master of criticism has pronounced to be the essence of poetic diction. Truly poetic passion is only affection in critical conditions of extraordinary fruition or hindrance, and control and not disorder is its highest artistic sanction. The prevailing theme of tragedy is not the representation, but the punishment of disordered desires. The most terrible tragedy ever written, *King Lear*, turns entirely upon the results of the excessive addiction—which most critics have mistaken for the exceeding virtue—of Cordelia to reticence of feeling at a time when its expansive

expression would have been natural and dutiful. There is no true poem or novel without 'a moral': least of all such as, being all beauty (that is to say, all order), are all moral. Modern critics have come to be satisfied with mere pathological studies, and to scout as inartistic that which is of the very essence of all that is worthy to be called art. A 'moral' is only inartistic when the artist has not sufficient strength of character and language to make it a real force, either as the kernel of disaster or felicity.

The Vicar of Wakefield fully justifies Dr. Johnson in pronouncing Goldsmith 'a great man'. The present literary public knows more of Goldsmith's amusing personal vanities than of his work, and it is from these vanities that its estimate of him is tacitly formed; yet the epithet of 'great' is not denied by such critics to Blake, who seems to have been little better than an idiot, except in some few lucid hours of his life.

To praise this little novel rightly would be to transcribe it from beginning to end. There is nothing in English literature—or, as far as we are aware, in any other literature—to be compared with it. It is throughout 'heroic'; yet never for a moment incredible, or—what is still more wonderful—uninteresting. It is, on the whole, so lovely and noble a work that it ought, like Shakespeare's plays, to be held above criticism. None but a heartless literary prig would dwell upon certain apparently irrelevant discussions or improbable concatenations of events towards the end of the story as faults. *The Vicar of Wakefield* is in the highest sense ideal in its purpose and effect, without the least sacrifice of reality in any one of its characters; whose strength and beauty are

rendered probable, and therefore attractive and truly exemplary, by failure for the moment under evils and temptations which are too much for their simple humanity. The vicar curses the seducer of his daughter, and proposes to shoot him, only to heighten on the whole the impression of his simple sanctity. A real though temporary vitiation of character appears in the charming Olivia in her behaviour at home after her fall; and vanities and follies great enough to provoke passing anger and impatience, even in the reader, are found in Sophia herself. True wisdom is glorified, and not discredited, by being shown to exist in immediate conjunction with extreme ignorance of the world and the world's knowledge; and love is throughout magnified under its affective rather than its passionate aspects—the passions of the lovers assimilating themselves to the patient and abiding affections of parents and children, while these have the force and splendour of the passions of lovers.

The finish of this work is not amazing only because it is so interior. It is the finish of the Greek tragedian, who spoke of one of his plays as finished before he had written a line of it. The finish of even Miss Austen, compared with that of Goldsmith in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, is as superficies compared with substance. We do not even notice the strong and delicate perfection of the language which is the medium of thoughts, feelings, and situations so exquisite in themselves and so exquisitely contrasted, combined, and harmonized.

Of Goldsmith's poetry it is enough to say that the taste and artistic training of the age in which he lived did not admit of any better. Of the matter it can

boast that, space for space, no poetry except that of Horace contains so many lines and passages which have passed into stock quotations and proverbial sayings. Of the manner we cannot take adequate comparative account without allowing for the *Zeitgeist* which has so tyrannical an influence over poetic style, or without considering that a time may come when the style or styles of our own most approved poets may appear as manifestly defective as that of *The Traveller* or *The Deserted Village*. In *Retaliation* and one or two of Goldsmith's shorter pieces, which he threw off as unconsidered trifles unworthy of full poetic elaboration, nothing can be more perfect and in accordance with the classical standard of manner in such kinds of composition; but in his serious work he was not able altogether to cast aside the time's false tradition of 'poetic diction', or to recur to the purer and subtler laws of versification to which the best poets of the Coleridgian era again submitted their art, and from which our own age appears to be again relapsing, but into the opposite extreme. It is really only a 'matter of taste', rather than one of sound principle, whether a man prefers to travel on the dull tramway of the versification of Goldsmith or Dr. Johnson, or to stumble over the hillocks of potsherds and broken brickbats to which the 'rhythm' of some much-praised modern poetry may be likened. Yet even as a mere matter of taste, it seems that a dull adherence to the modulus of metre—an almost incessant slight and significant departure from which is the source of the incessant expressiveness of the best poetry—is less objectionable than the incessant and not slight nor significant violations of that modulus which are often

the source of the boasted liveliness and variety of much verse of the present century. The laws of metre are like the laws of life in this, that the affections and passions evoke music by a tender strain upon them which never breaks them. The bad poet, like the bad man, trifles with such laws for the sake of mere excitement and escape from monotony, stretching these formal limits without the excuse of true emotion, and breaking them rather than suffer the *ennui* of his own dullness.

Of Goldsmith's life and personal character and habits Mr. Austin Dobson has given a sensible, sufficient, and unsuperfluous account. Every one has an image in his mind of the thoughtless, vain, and amiable poet, who must have been a dreadful bore to all upon whom he had personal claims, but a charming companion for all who loved genius and the kind of wit which comes from quickness of heart, and who could discern that the vanity which thirsts for the praise and attention even of the insignificant is only a kind of disorderly humility. Mr. Dobson's prose is good, but scarcely good enough for the writer of such dainty bits of poetical expression as *Good Night, Babette!* and *The Child-Musician.* The Muse that can dance so gracefully in the shackles of verse should so walk in prose that the goddess could still be recognized by her way of going.

COMPARING SMALL THINGS WITH GREAT

[*St. James's Gazette*, January 22, 1886, signed, 'C. P.']

We ought to feel very proud of the literature of the nineteenth century, if faith is to be put in the sayings of some of our critics. Every reader of the literary journals must remember to have seen at least half a dozen modern poets and novelists compared with Shakespeare, sometimes not altogether to the advantage of the latter. Dickens, Mr. Browning, Mrs. Browning, Lord Tennyson, George Eliot, Crabbe, and Miss Austen, among others, have each and all had their works hung up over against those of Shakespeare, with a bold challenge of comparison, as Turner has been juxtaposed with Claude Lorraine in the National Gallery.

This kind of criticism sometimes means nothing more than a sort of swearing. If the critic had been talking with his friend over a pipe, instead of being confined to the decorum of print, he might have expressed himself with more force and more accuracy by declaring the object of his admiration to be 'a d——d fine writer, by Jove!' But a string of commendatory opinions of Jane Austen's writings, contained in a publisher's advertisement, reminds us that this jovial kind of expression has not been confined to those who might have excused themselves for writing vague nonsense by the reflection that it would not be remembered beyond the week in which it was uttered. Lord Macaulay is quoted as saying, 'Among the writers who have approached nearest to the manner of the great master' (Shakespeare) 'we have no

hesitation in placing Jane Austen'. Sir Henry Taylor, in his *Autobiography*, says, 'Alfred Tennyson . . . spoke of Jane Austen, as James Spedding does, as next to Shakespeare'. Mary Russell Mitford puts 'Chaucer, Shakespeare, Scott, Jane Austen' together. George Eliot concludes a passage of otherwise sensible praise by backing the criticism of Lord Macaulay.

Having read every one of Miss Austen's novels many times, with still renewed delight and admiration, I must not be charged with depreciatory and unsympathetic feelings if I point out that between Shakespeare or any other great imaginative writer and Miss Austen there are absolutely no terms of comparison except those of contraries. Shakespeare is so great that few of his readers, perhaps none, have ever taken in the whole of the purpose and significance of any one play. Who shall say, therefore, whether his works are as 'perfect' as those of Miss Austen or not? For myself, I think they are not. Most noble is, as a rule, most incomplete; and it is probable that, from Shakespeare's own point of view, if any could attain to consider his works therefrom, they would be found very far from faultless, whereas we might safely have defied Miss Austen herself to detect a fault in anything she ever wrote. Shakespeare stands alone for greatness, not for perfectness, which we never think about in reading him. Miss Austen is as small as she is perfect; but in reading her we never think of the smallness, but only of her really almost incomparable perfection. Carlyle said that the morality by which Mirabeau can be judged has not yet got uttered by the tongue of man. The like may be said of the laws of art by which Shakespeare is to be estimated; but, though

we agree with George Eliot that 'only cultivated minds fairly appreciate the exquisite art of Miss Austen', it is also true that every cultivated mind should be able to appreciate it, unless overborne by that avalanche of undiscerning praise which Sir Walter Scott made himself responsible for, when he good-humouredly depreciated his own greater and more noble powers in terms at which he would have opened his eyes, had he heard such praise of the lady from any one else. Again, all the purpose and beauty of Miss Austen's writings lie on the surface, and can be taken in at a glance by a tolerably well-cultivated eye; whereas the immeasurably greater superficial beauties of Shakespeare cover seas of significance. Again, there is scarcely a trace of the imaginative faculty in Miss Austen. Her stories are photographed experiences, and these of the most ordinary sort. Her most charming heroine, Emma, and her noblest hero, Mr. Knightley, never for a moment rise into any flight of feeling that would justify the faintest rhythmical throb in the exquisite prose which is the proper vehicle of their sentiments. Shakespeare is of imagination all compact. He is most faithful, indeed, to nature; but not to nature as it is seen by ordinary eyes. A nobleman, for whom Turner had painted a picture, is reported to have complained that he 'could not see such colours in the sky'. 'Don't you wish you could?' was the painter's reply. Shakespeare's humanity is heroic. Kings, sages, lovers, villains, charlatans, and humorists walk the stage, not as they are, but as they might be if the hearts and heads of men had thrice the vigour of humanity as it is. His heroes and heroines could not have spoken in

prose. In Miss Austen there is no unique individuality or 'style'. Her manner is quite perfect, and is sustained more thoroughly than by any other novelist; though several novelists have written pages and chapters which she would not have disowned. Shakespeare's is the greatest and most singular individuality that ever expressed itself in literature; and the loss of any one of his plays would be a greater disaster to art than that of all Miss Austen's works put together.

But this 'parallel' of two lines crossing at right angles must be pursued no further. The emptiness of the sort of criticism we wish to expose will be better demonstrated by comparing Miss Austen for a moment with one or two other novelists. Will any reader with any true sense for art maintain in good faith that her merits are to be compared with those of Sir Walter Scott? That his dialogues are often such as no humanity, heroic or unheroic, would use now, or is likely to have used at any time, is a very serious fault. One-tenth of the talk of some of his graver personages would have sunk Miss Austen in oblivion as soon as she appeared. But how is it that so many of us read the *Antiquary* thrice for once that we read *Northanger Abbey*? How is it that we listen with impatient pity to the strictures of our young gentleman from school on the unnaturalness of much of the conversation? It is because, in reading Scott, we are not delighted by seeing our commonplace selves and acquaintances reflected with amazing fidelity, with now and then a touch of delicate and redeeming irony: our pleasure is of an almost opposite kind—namely, that of finding ourselves constantly in the ennobling and exhilarating presence of an individuality of extraordinary strength,

breadth, and geniality ; of a man who represents the greatest and most agitating events and passions with the insight of a poet and the magnificent moderation of a master and who flings over all that he describes 'the light that never was on sea or land'. In short, Scott was an original and imaginative artist, which no woman ever was. Miss Austen has carried imitative art to its highest perfection. No man, perhaps, has ever done anything in its way so faultless as *Emma*, or so admirable and sustained for delicate and sensitive observation of small things expressed with finished accuracy and beautiful reticence. But these qualities do not entitle her to be measured with Scott ; nor do any others which she displays.

Now compare Miss Austen's stories with *Tom Jones*, or *Vanity Fair*, or *Barchester Towers*. These books, as works of true art, do not approach the greater novels of Scott. They are different in kind—I think inferior—and, in their own kind, they have serious defects and shortcomings. But he must be a critic on a very small scale who could rise from the successive reading of either of these works and the best of Miss Austen's with a conviction that the lady's work was, on the whole, the most valuable. At a time in which the claims of woman are so loudly and courageously asserted, not without disparagement of those of that 'once important sex' the male, we must occasionally depart from the pleasing custom of ignoring our own superiority in some things, for the sake of truth. And the truth is, that *Tom Jones*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Barchester Towers* are works of more value than *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*, and *Sense and Sensibility* because the former are masculine and the latter feminine.

GREAT TALKERS

[*St. James's Gazette*, March 13, 20, 30, 1887.]

I. COLERIDGE

The published *Table-talk* of men like Coleridge, Goethe, Luther, Johnson, and Selden, makes us almost wish that they might have done nothing but talk, with some one by to take notes. In talk they poured forth their best; uttering briefly, intelligibly, and with the animation of sympathy and sympathetic conflict, that which is repeated in their books, but there elaborated, often obscured, and often compromised by the process of connecting and harmonizing their ideas. This is signally true of Coleridge. Most of the thoughts which, in the *Aids to Reflection*, the *Statesman's Manual*, and other of his writings, shone only as the more lustrous points of luminous nebulae, in his recorded conversations glitter as brightly and distinctly as stars in a frosty night. It only needs a perusal of the exquisite and now too rarely read volume of Coleridge's *Table-talk* to remind us that to him, more than to any other Englishman of the present century, we are indebted for such 'sweetness and light' as our present culture possesses. In everything in which he interested himself—and he interested himself in everything—he united depth and ardour with breadth and charity; and consequently was, and is, loved and hated as a man of genius and character should be. But haters are always more influential and wise in their generation than lovers, and those who in our day have felt themselves rebuked by his light have managed

to damage by ignoring the fame which they could not hurt by attack. Coleridge's political and social sayings, uttered between fifty and sixty years ago and in or about the agitating times of Catholic Emancipation and the first Reform Bill, are full of the most living meaning for the present day. Here are a few of them.

You see how this House of Commons has begun to verify all the ill prophecies that were made of it—low, vulgar, meddling with everything, assuming universal competency, flattering every base passion and sneering at everything refined and truly national.

In a country of any religion at all, liberty of conscience can only be permanently preserved by means and under the shadow of a national Church—a political establishment connected with but distinct from the spiritual Church.

The ideal Tory and the ideal Whig (and some such there have really been) agreed in the necessity and benefit of an exact balance of the three estates ; but the Tory was more jealous of the balance being deranged by the people, the Whig of its being damaged by the Crown. But this was a habit, a jealousy only ; they both agreed in the ultimate preservation of the balance, and accordingly they might each, under certain circumstances, without the slightest inconsistency, pass from one side to the other as the ultimate object required it.

England I see as a country, but the English nation seems obliterated. What could redintegrate us again ? Must it be another threat of foreign invasion ?

I have never known a trader in philanthropy who was not wrong in heart somewhere or other. Individuals so distinguished are usually unhappy in their family relations—men not benevolent or beneficent to individuals, but almost hostile to them, yet lavishing money and labour and time on the race, the abstract notion. The cosmopolitism which does not spring out of, and blossom upon, the deep-rooted stem of nationality or patriotism is a spurious and rotten growth.

Your modern political economists say that it is a principle in their science that all things *find* their level; which I deny, and say, on the contrary, that the true principle is that all things are *finding* their level, like water in a storm.

It is God's mercy to our age that our Jacobins are infidels and a scandal to all sober Christians. Had they been like the old Puritans, they would have trodden Church and King to the dust.

See how triumphant in debate and in action O'Connell is! Why? Because he asserts a broad principle, and acts up to it, rests all his body on it, and has faith in it. Our Ministers—true Whigs in that—have faith in nothing but expedients *de die in diem*.

Now, after a long continuance of high national glory and influence, when a revolution of a most searching and general character is actually at work, and the old institutions of the country are all awaiting their certain destruction or violent modification, the people at large are perfectly secure—sleeping or gambolling upon the very brink of a volcano.

The evils which Coleridge foresaw have been more tardy in coming than he expected. A nation in the heart of which there is so much vigour as there was in the England of fifty years ago takes a good while a-dying; but the alarmingly diminished vitality of our present England more than justified the forebodings of the philosophic politician. 'Slow', writes the Greek tragedian, 'is the wrath of God, but in the end not weak.'

We select, almost at random, and from a hundred as good, the following remarks:

'Most women have no character at all,' said Pope, and meant it for satire. Shakespeare, who knew men and women much better, saw that it, in fact, was the perfection of woman to be characterless. Every one wishes a Desdemona or Ophelia for a wife—creatures who, though they

may not always understand you, do always feel you, and feel with you.

It seems to my ear that there is a great want of harmony in Lord Byron's verses. Then is it not unnatural to be always connecting very great intellectual power with utter depravity ? Does such a combination often really exist *in rerum natura ?*

Poetry is certainly something more than good sense ; but it must be good sense, at all events : just as a palace is more than a house ; but it must be a house, at least.

Shakespeare's intellectual action is wholly unlike that of Ben Jonson, or Beaumont and Fletcher. The latter see the totality of a sentence or a passage, and then project it entire. Shakespeare goes on creating, and evolving B out of A and C out of B, and so on ; just as a serpent moves, making a fulcrum of its own body, and seeming for ever twisting and untwisting its own strength.

In the above extracts we have abstained from transcribing any of Coleridge's deeper and most valuable sayings, because they require more attention than could fairly be asked from the readers of a newspaper ; but we cannot help giving one passage which verges upon the philosophic, as an example of the simple way in which Coleridge could dispose, in conversation, of a question which he would probably have enveloped with a metaphysical mist had he been dealing with it in a book. ' So you object, with old Hobbes, that I do good actions *for* the pleasure of a good conscience ; and so, after all, I am only a refined sensualist ! Heaven bless you, and mend your logic ! Don't you see that if conscience, which is in its nature a consequence, were thus anticipated and made an antecedent—a party instead of a judge—it would dishonour your draft upon it—it would not pay on demand ? Don't you see that, in truth, the very fact

of acting with this motive properly and logically destroys all claim upon conscience to give you any pleasure at all.'

II. GOETHE

There is no figure in literary history which is at once so gentle, noble, magnanimous, and wise as the Goethe of the German Boswell, Eckermann. It is the minor praise of his report of Goethe's conversation that it contains more memorable sayings than any other modern book. The main value of the book lies in its gracious and heart-enlarging portrayal of the great poet's personality. *There* was a grand old man indeed! Eckermann's record extends over only the last ten years of Goethe's life, but these were probably his best. He was past his most vigorous working period; but his talk was all the better for that. While his labour was going on his habit was to be extremely reticent about what most interested him; for he was keenly alive to the loss which such work is apt to suffer by being talked of while it is being done. From 1822 to 1832, the date of his death, he seems to have felt that he could not do better with his time than spend it in talk, especially with Eckermann. His knowledge that the latter was 'taking notes' was no hindrance to the freedom and sunny sweetness of his intercourse with him. In the ripe vigour of his old age there is no trace of the serious faults that vitiated some of his greatest works; which it is impossible to deny are often immoral, and which are sometimes chargeable with the charlatanism that would have no meaning or imperfect meaning pass with the world for mysterious significance; and which, wonderful to say of Goethe,

contain traces of absolute vulgarity and coarseness of perception.

Some one has well applied to Goethe the words of Shelley :

> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stain'd the white radiance of eternity.

In the talk of Coleridge truth seems to come to us as sunlight through a sheet of crystal, carrying with it nothing of the talker's personality but his love of and joyful subjection to its inspiration. Goethe's conversation was not only coloured by his own great and most interesting individuality, but what made it most valuable was that it was in large part about himself. Coleridge, in his love of the pure truth, fell often into hopeless obscurity from forgetfulness of the fact that truth is only intelligible in its application to the realities of life. Goethe's truth is always applied.

> He knows what 's what, and that 's as high
> As metaphysic wit can fly.

He was endowed with that best wisdom which minds nothing but its own business. He had a profound insight into politics, as into most things ; but he saw that in his time and position he could not materially influence politics ; and, seeing that, excluded them persistently from his interest, as being no business of his. In the advancement of his country, and thence of mankind, by art and the criticism of art, lay his faculty and his opportunity, and therefore his business ; and to this business he devoted himself with integrity, and with the usual effectiveness of a single-minded aim. When, however, Goethe was obliged in the course of conversation to speak of politics, he always did so with

the great good sense with which he speaks on every other subject :

I hate all bungling (he says), like sin ; but, most of all, bungling in State affairs, which produces mischief to thousands and millions.

The true Liberal endeavours to effect as much good as he can with the means which he has at command ; but he would not extirpate evils, which are often inevitable, with fire and sword. He endeavours gradually to remove glaring defects, without at the same time destroying an equal amount of good by violent measures. He contents himself in this imperfect world with what is good, until time and circumstances favour his attaining something better.

It is by severe moderation in everything that the Chinese Empire has sustained itself for thousands of years.

Goethe has been freely censured for the serenity with which he could dare the battle-field with the sole purpose of experimentally investigating certain phenomena connected with the passage of bullets through the air. But that—for he was a man of science as well as an artist—was his business, and fighting was not ; ' and, between ourselves,' he says, ' I did not hate the French, although I thanked God heartily when we were free from them. How could I, to whom culture and barbarism are alone of importance, hate a nation which is among the most cultivated of the earth, and to which I owe so great a part of my own cultivation ? '

Although quite inactive in politics, Goethe was a keen political observer, and often pointed out the arts by which base persons win great power. If such a person ' does not know how to conciliate by good deeds, he must think of other means, and there is none better or more effective than religion and an appearance of sympathy with the customs of the people. To

appear at Church every Sunday, to look at and let himself be looked at for an hour by the congregation, is the best means of becoming popular.'

Goethe's admiration for the literature of England was very great; and the criticisms of English writers, which abound in these conversations, are clear in principle, ardent and subtle in appreciation, and conclusive. He was glad, for his own sake, that Germany had no such literature.

> At every step of life and development my standard of excellence was not much higher than what at such step I was able to attain. But had I been born an Englishman, and had all those numerous masterpieces been brought before me in all their power, at my first dawn of youthful consciousness, they would have overpowered me.

It may be useful to such of our young folks as pride themselves upon looking down on Walter Scott, to be told that perhaps the greatest artist and critic of modern times looked up to him as an example of unapproachable greatness in his way.

Goethe's reticence and utter voidness of cant have got him a bad name with those who love their heroes best when they can look at them in church; but many religious persons would find themselves the better for following, in some things, the precepts and example of the great poet. How admirable is this: 'We should only utter higher maxims so far as they can benefit the world. The rest we should keep within ourselves; and they will diffuse over our actions a lustre like the mild radiance of a hidden sun.' Again: 'I will tell you something by which you should hold fast during your future life: there is an accessible and an inaccessible. Be careful to discriminate between the two, and

proceed with reverence.' Goethe's general silence about religion, while he talked so deeply and freely about everything else, arose from his believing not less, but more, than most men, and from his profound sense that such knowledge was mainly incommunicable. As far as we remember, he has not in any of his works or words either directly or indirectly supported or impugned any article of Christian belief. Theology, like politics, was not within his proper sphere of influence.

Here is a good hint for 'thoughtful persons'. 'Meyer,' said Goethe, laughing, 'always says, "If thinking were not so hard." And the worst thing is, that all the thinking in the world does not bring us to thought; we must be right by nature, that good thoughts may come before us like free children of God, and cry "Here we are".'

About half of Eckermann's big volume is occupied by remarks on art, of which the following are about average specimens:

That undisturbed, innocent, somnambulatory state of production, from which alone anything great can come, is no longer possible. Our talents at present lie before the public. The daily criticisms which appear in fifty different places, and the gossip that is caused by them, prevent the appearance of any rounded production. In the present day he who does not keep aloof from all this, and isolate himself by main force, is lost.

A particular case becomes universal by the very circumstance that it is touched by a poet. All my poems are occasional poems, suggested by real life, and having therein a firm foundation. I attach no value to poems snatched out of the air.

I call the classic *healthy* and the romantic *sickly*. In this sense the *Nibelungenlied* is as classic as the *Iliad*, for

both are vigorous and healthy. Most modern productions are romantic, not because they are new but because they are weak, morbid, and sickly; and the antique is classic not because it is old but because it is strong, fresh, joyous, and healthy.

National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of world-literature is at hand.

We learn nothing by reading Winckelmann, but we become something.

No small part of the charm of this most charming book consists in Eckermann's own share of the talk. He was so completely imbued with Goethe's spirit that whatever he said about anything was what Goethe would have said about it had it been his subject. We conclude with a good touch of Eckermann's pencil:

His (Goethe's) face is so powerful and brown; full of wrinkles, and each wrinkle full of expression. And everywhere there is such nobleness and firmness, such repose and greatness. He spoke in a slow composed manner, such as you would expect from an aged monarch. You perceive by his air that he rests in himself, and is elevated far above both praise and blame.

III. LUTHER

The three men whom we have chosen as the greatest examples of great talkers are curiously contrasted in the relations of their minds to the truth they endeavoured to serve. To Coleridge the truth was the pure white ray which his intellect followed whithersoever it went; that ray was never deflected or decomposed by any personal interest or particular affection. It was itself his one interest and affection. Goethe's mind was a prism that broke the ray into splendid colours, varying with the varying surface of every interest, but always

remaining pure light. In Luther the light of truth was mingled with and confused by the glare of his own passions. His personal religion was intense; and, so long as his thoughts were mainly occupied with his private relations to the object of his worship, his devotion exemplified that union of light and fire which has made the author of the *Imitation* so vast an influence wherever the doctrine of the Incarnation is taught and believed. This is not the place in which this assertion can be proved by quotation; but any one who has inclination and aptitude for such studies, and will take the trouble to read through the bulky record of Luther's conversations, will agree with us that, were a selection made of all and only the passages in which personal devotion is concerned, it would form one of the very best little books of the kind.

No one, however, can rise from reading these conversations with much respect for Luther as a theologian; and as a controversialist, he appears throughout as simply no better nor worse than Mr. Habakkuk Mucklewrath. He always speaks as a man plenarily inspired, and replies to the blasphemy of opposition or dissent by torrents of prophetic curses and scurrility. When he is speaking of opponents of intellect superior to his own, it is impossible not to be reminded of Carlyle's talk when he found himself in similar states of collision: for example, when he declared that Dr. Newman had 'no more brain than a rabbit'. Indeed, the reader of these conversations will be struck by more points than one of resemblance between the two great reformers. They both carried the advantages and disadvantages of their breeding as peasants into the region of propagandism and controversy. Their

thoughts and language were simple and concrete, and they derived from their very limitations a force, 'earnestness', and assurance which always pass with the generality of people for guarantees of truth and integrity.

Luther had little knowledge of men. He felt certain that he had dealt a death-blow to the Roman Church : not being able to discern that, whether they be right or wrong in this feeling, there will always be a large proportion of mankind who feel the necessity for, or at least the comfort of, having what they can esteem an external sanction for their faith ; and that nothing can overthrow the presumed seat of this sanction so long as it is supported by the prudence or wisdom not to contradict itself, and only to give forth its *ex cathedra* utterances once in two or three hundred years or so : and then only on one or two central points in the fluctuating sea of religious questions. Nor had Luther a true conception of the nature of the part he really played in the Reformation. His was the pistol-shot that set a-sliding the avalanche which had been accumulating for generations, and which must have come down of itself had no such initiative been given to it.

The age of Luther was not the first, nor will it be the last, that has witnessed the extraordinary phenomenon of the simultaneous developments of the greatest general corruption and the highest individual sanctity. The Church depicted by Benvenuto Cellini was the Church of Sir Thomas More, Ignatius, St. Theresa, and of a score of others of the same quality. But of such as these it was never Luther's cue to speak ; or, if he spoke, it was to cover them

with the abuse which he poured forth impartially upon his contemporary opponents, the earliest saints and doctors of the Church, and the Bible itself when it did not happen to corroborate his peculiar infallibility. St. Bernard, Sir Thomas More, and St. Augustine are all treated as if they had 'no more brains than a rabbit'. 'Erasmus of Rotterdam is the vilest miscreant that ever disgraced the earth. . . . He is a very Caiaphas. Shame upon thee, accursed wretch! Whenever I pray, I pray for a curse upon Erasmus.'

Luther professed to hate all sorts of mysticism; but when he speaks of his enemies, especially the Pope, he rises, or rather dives, into an atmosphere compared with which that of St. Bridget or St. John of the Cross is clearness. 'Seeing the Pope is Antichrist, I believe him to be a devil incarnate. Like as Christ is true and natural God and man, so is Antichrist a living devil, &c.' 'All wild beasts are beasts of the Law, for they live in fear and quaking; they have all swarthy and black flesh, by reason of their fear; but tame beasts have white flesh, for they are beasts of grace.' A very large proportion of Luther's recorded sayings consists of such ravings as these; but, fortunately for the modern reader, Luther's talk has been divided into many sections, according to subject. The general reader may profitably skip about half the book, which treats of 'Justification', 'Councils', 'Antichrist', &c., and confine himself to chapters in which the genial, vigorous, and sincerely religious Luther is more properly himself. There is no more refreshing and invigorating reading than these more or less personal chapters, full as they are of kindness, homely wisdom, and unconscious quaintness, and abounding with lively anecdote;

having the flavour of cotemporary recital, and giving the liveliest glimpses of how the world went on at that time. Here are a few paragraphs out of hundreds as well worth quoting :

Though I am an old Doctor of Divinity, to this day I have not got beyond the children's learning—the Ten Commandments, the Belief, and the Lord's Prayer ; and these I understand not so well as I should, though I study them daily, praying, with my son John and my daughter Magdalen.

He that has but one word of God before him, and out of that word cannot make a sermon, can never be a preacher.

Where God builds a church, there the devil will also build a chapel.

When I saw Dr. Gode begin to count his puddings hanging in the chimney I told him he would not live long ; and when I begin to trouble myself about brewing, malting, cooking, &c., then I shall soon die.

I saw a dog, at Lintz, in Austria, that was taught to go with a hand-basket to the butcher's shambles for meat. When other dogs came about him, and sought to take the meat out of the basket, he set it down and fought lustily with them ; but when he saw they were too strong for him, he himself would snatch out the first piece of meat, lest he should lose all. Even so does our now Emperor Charles, who, after having long protected spiritual benefices, seeing that every prince takes possession of monasteries, himself takes possession of bishoprics ; as just now he has seized upon those of Utrecht and Liège.

When I am assailed with heavy tribulations, I rush out among my pigs, rather than remain alone by myself. The human heart is like a millstone in a mill ; when you put wheat under it, it turns and bruises the wheat to flour ; if you put no wheat, it still grinds on, but then 'tis itself it grinds and wears away.

The Turks are of opinion that 'tis no uncommon thing for a virgin to bear a child. I would by no means introduce this belief into my family.

COLERIDGE

[*St. James's Gazette*, March 16 and June 13, 1887.]

I

The wonder and astonishment with which the 'purest ray serene' of Coleridge's intellect affected all those who knew him have scarcely ever been aroused in an equal degree by any other personality. 'All other men whom I have ever known,' said Southey, 'are mere children to him.' 'He is like a lump of coal rich with gas,' wrote Scott, 'which lies expending itself in puffs and gleams, unless some shrewd body will clap it into a cast-iron box and compel the compressed element to do itself justice.' 'He is the only person I ever knew who answered to the idea of a man of genius,' said Hazlitt. 'He is,' said De Quincey, 'the largest and most spacious intellect, the subtlest and most comprehensive that has yet existed among men.' 'Byron and Scott,' wrote Landor, 'are but as gun-flints to a granite mountain' when compared with him. Wordsworth and Lamb gave the still deeper testimony of a life-long tenderness of devotion, which there was nothing but the greatness and purity of his spirit to arouse in them. Carlyle and others gave like witness; though sometimes it was blurred with irritable censure, which probably rose rather from their own limitations than Coleridge's. The deliberate verdict of time has confirmed the justice of these first impressions; although the mass of mankind, ever ready to take a man at his own valuation, has adopted Coleridge's humble estimate of himself as a 'wasted life', and although

it has been of late the fashion, among such as 'hate the happy light' they cannot extinguish under the blackness of their materialism, to try to prove him a plagiarist of his thoughts and a hypocrite in his profession of belief in them. Even many of those who are most indebted to him for the force with which he has advocated their principles have been shy of him or have disliked him, because in his speech those principles have shone forth with a, to them, startling and repulsive reality, and an increase of obligatory character, which has made them shrink back with an 'Ugh, ugh! the horrid things: they are alive!'

A 'wasted life', indeed! Coleridge has written of politics with the greatest power of awakening men to a living apprehension of the immediate and infallible connexion of universal principles with consequences of universal import. In religion, what Newman has done for the Church of Rome, that Coleridge has done for the Church of England: he has supplied it with the all but overwhelming argument that a perfectly disinterested heart and a mind of the subtlest and strongest quality and the widest modern culture can accept its teaching with satisfaction. In art, he has written poems, not long, indeed, or many, but enough to set before the poets of all future time a model of (in its way) an almost unapproachable perfection. In criticism he has combined the breadth and subtlety of Hegel with the clearness and solidity of Goethe. This is Coleridge's public work; and the public has little reason to trouble itself as to whether he took too much of an anodyne that was necessary to allay the agonies of internal disease, or whether the mistake

that he and Miss Fricker made in marrying was or was not great enough to justify an informal separation. But since the public will pry into these things, and all sorts of hard and untrue judgements have been passed upon Coleridge by all sorts of men, from the somewhat cold and pharisaical Southey to the author of the shameful *Liber Amoris*, it is a good thing that he should have found in Mr. Hall Caine [1] a biographer who, without concealing or glossing over anything, can judge with somewhat of the wise and truthful sympathy with which the great seer was regarded by those truest and tenderest of natures, Wordsworth and Lamb. Coleridge's life was, in reality, one of singular innocence, humility, integrity, and laboriousness. Beyond the comparatively venial fault of making an unsuitable marriage—and for him probably any marriage would have been unsuitable—and that of seeking release from incessant bodily pain, and consequent intellectual disability, in that which procured for him seasons of ease and splendid mental clearness at the expense of intervening periods of profound nervous depression, there is extraordinarily little matter for moral censure in the poet's history. He has never been suspected of having broken the bond between himself and his wife by any immorality. When he was himself otherwise penniless, he caused the whole of the comfortable pension allowed to him by the Wedgwoods to be devoted to the support of his wife and children. When every minute's work was a martyrdom, he worked many hours daily in order to keep himself from being dependent upon

[1] *Life of Coleridge.* By Hall Caine. (London: Walter Scott, 1887.)

people who would have been proud to have supported him, and in order to supply his son's expenses at the university; and in this work he showed an almost heart-rending humility and self-abnegation; for, when such prose and poetry as no one else living could write failed to produce the very limited means required for his necessities, he turned at once, and without giving himself any grand airs, to the very lowest literary drudgery, even that of condensing parliamentary and police reports for newspapers. There was no honest means of getting a livelihood which he did not try, when there seemed the slightest chance of succeeding in it; and he appeared no more angry or surprised at the products of his proper genius not 'paying' than Isaiah or the author of the Song of Songs would have been at a similar failure. Byron and Scott pillaged *Christabel* of its most wonderful charm, its new accentual metre, before that poem was published; but, when it came out, Hazlitt declared in the *Edinburgh Review* that it was 'the most notable piece of impertinence of which the press had lately been guilty', and *Blackwood* and other leading authorities followed suit. *Blackwood* pronounced the *Biographia Literaria* to be 'wild ravings', and coupled its author with Joanna Southcott. Southey, meanwhile, who might have done anything with the *Quarterly Review*, never lifted his voice to stem the torrent of abuse of writing of which he must have well known the merit, though by doing so he would have relieved his brother-in-law and former friend of most of the temptations to failures which he was forward to condemn. Let those who, by mere force of genius, are disabled from making

a living, cast a stone if they will at this great Englishman for his supposed lack of independence. As for the charge so bitterly brought against himself, of having 'wasted his life', it was probably altogether erroneous. Men of such genius as Coleridge's never waste their lives. An aloe might just as well be said to waste its life because it does not flower every month, like a China-rose.

II

The worst fault of Professor Brandl's book, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Romantic School*, is its title. The distinction between the so-called Classic and Romantic schools, which was spoken of with impatience by Goethe when it was generally held as a fundamental doctrine of criticism, has now become so antiquated and so justly discredited that it is surprising to find it figuring in a treatise of so much learning and good sense as this. Every work of art which has unity of idea and completeness of finish is 'classical'. There is no generic difference between a tragedy by Sophocles and one by Shakespeare, except that the unity of the one is simpler and more obvious than that of the other. The 'Classic' and 'Romantic', in so far as they can be opposed, are the proper names of two equally false schools: one governed by mainly conventional rules, or by artistic rules misunderstood in their application; the other defying, more or less, the essential and fundamental rules of all art. But, fortunately, Professor Brandl's book only occasionally remembers its title; and we have very little about the 'Romantic' and the 'Classic', and that little so unobtrusively

introduced that it does not interfere seriously with the main themes—Coleridge's life, character, and substantial work. These are recounted, described, and estimated with uncommon geniality and fairness, and a most agreeable absence of that ostentation of science and system which is the weakness of much German criticism. Rendered, as the book is, into good vernacular by Lady Eastlake, there is nothing to remind us that it has not been the work of an Englishman, unless it be the fact that at present we have no one who is English enough to have written it. It is wholly free from the nebulous and unprincipled character of the sensitive and feminine school of criticism to which the best of our living critics more or less belong. It is still further removed from the 'chatter about Shelley' sort of thing with which our periodical literature is at present deluged; and there is nothing of the still greater vice of some of our most noted writers upon kindred subjects—men who are ready to condone not only weaknesses such as those of Coleridge, but the worst aberration from morals and the most mischievous denial of principles and the laws of civilization, in favour of any one whose nerves happen to be so strung as to respond to the wind of feeling with an Aeolian wail, or whose lips have the knack of erupting pyrotechnic displays of 'prave 'orts' about anything or nothing.

Professor Brandl has had access to much new matter about Coleridge; but there is nothing concerning his character which tends otherwise than to confirm the view that was given in these pages in a recent notice of Mr. Hall Caine's book. We then defended Coleridge from the charge of indolence when work was necessary

for the support of his family. Professor Brandl's verdict also is, 'He was far from really indolent, only he liked to choose his own time.' The Professor might still better have said that 'he was obliged to choose his own time'. He was afflicted from his boyhood with great physical infirmity, and a constitution which rendered alternations of activity and comparative lethargy a law of his nature. But few men have worked more diligently and conscientiously when work was possible, and, for his family's sake, Coleridge often laboured like a slave when true work was impossible; and that this labour was in the main persistent, is proved by the fact that he was enabled to keep to the end his resolution, of never appropriating any part of the Wedgwood pension to his own uses, and that his family received from life assurances, laboriously kept up through many years, the (for them) considerable sum of £2,600. Professor Brandl's book also corroborates the view expressed by us that there was no fault on Coleridge's side in the fact that latterly he and his wife found it convenient to dwell apart. They were so congenitally unintelligible and intolerable to each other that the wonder is that the separation should have been effected without any indecent outbreak of passion or resentment on either part. Mrs. Coleridge, though in the main a good woman, was a complaining, 'nagging' creature. She was given over to fears and complaints, so that Southey nicknamed her 'Thisbe'. Hardly an hour passed without little desponding ejaculations: 'The cow does not eat'; 'The cow must be ill'; 'We shall lose the cow'; 'Southey earns so-and-so much, and my husband, with his superior talents, never bestirs

himself,' &c., &c. Thus she used to worry him with a swarm of little cares. 'One day he called on a medical man, and with tears in his eyes complained that his wife was really beside herself; for, on the coldest mornings and with icicles hanging from the roof, she would require him to get up in his night-shirt and light the fire before she dressed herself and the children.' He tried hard to love her, and did love her long after a man of less pure and tender conscience would have given it up.

> It 's weary work enforcing love
> On one who has enough thereof,
> And honour on the lowlihead
> Of ignorance.

He is said once (Professor Brandl does not seem to have come across the anecdote) in a poetical passion to have adored upon his knees the ideal which was not in her, and to have received from her the all too sensible reproof, 'Get oop, Coleridge.' This sort of thing must have been as insupportable by her as her complaint about the cow and her orders to 'get oop' and light the fire must have been to him; and what could the pair have done better than amicably drop into the habit of paying independent visits of indefinite duration to the houses of different friends?

Professor Brandl's appreciation of Coleridge's work is thoroughly genial and fair, and has been assisted by an uncommonly full acquaintance with that of the German and other writers by whom Coleridge was most influenced. Coleridge's philosophical services did not consist in the origination of new ideas and systems; but in a special power of realizing and

applying to modern use that fundamental wisdom which is found in the earliest dawn of literature, and which the wisest in all ages have been contented to hand down to posterity undiminished and unadded-to; and his services in this way have been all the greater because he followed the example of all the wisest in adopting an aphoristic instead of a systematic mode of teaching. Coleridge, in a haphazard but most effectual way, has seen and re-uttered with singular clearness all that is most vital in all philosophies; and it is most fortunate for the effect of his teaching that he never attained the ambition he seems always to have had before him, to systematize and reconcile that which our present powers appear to be incapable of systematizing or reconciling.

MEMORIALS OF COLEORTON

[*St. James's Gazette*, December 6, 1887.]

The fierce light that beats upon the throne of the poet in our days is accounted for by the fact that interest in poetry is becoming less and less of a passion and more and more an affectation or fashion. In one of the letters now given to the public by Mr. William Knight,[1] Wordsworth writes, 'There neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or

[1] *Memorials of Coleorton*; being Letters from Coleridge, Wordsworth and his Sister, Southey, and Sir Walter Scott, to Sir George and Lady Beaumont—1803 to 1834. Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by William Knight. Two vols. (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1887.)

wish to live, in the broad light of the world—among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society.' Yet it is among these slaves of the world that poetry, or what is declared to be poetry by the consensus of magazine critics, is just now most in fashion; and a Belgravian maiden will fetch a good deal more in the market if, with the advantage of being beautiful, she can lisp the most advanced slang about Browning and the musical glasses: or, what is as effective and involves less troublesome reading, can fall into ecstasies of admiration for the private virtues of Shelley, or pronounce grave and pitying condemnation on the marital shortcomings of Coleridge. That extensive public which knows and cares nothing, but which reads and talks mainly about art and artists, will not find much in the two volumes of correspondence before us to supply them with new topics of conversation. With the exception of a preface concerning Sir George and Lady Beaumont, and a few of the briefest of explanatory notes, Mr. William Knight serves up Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey *au naturel*; and, in the absence of the several kinds of *sauces piquantes* with which we are accustomed to find the lives and letters of the poets presented to us, the sense of that repose which, after all, marks the manners of the great poets as of other great people, is very pleasing. This mass of unselected correspondence, written without any idea that it would ever meet the eye of the public, will scarcely escape the charge of dullness from those who read for excitement and for 'points' to be used at dinner-time; but it will teach to some the agreeable lesson that men of

genius, as it was said of some celebrated lady, think, feel, and act very much as other people do, only a great deal better.

Little or nothing of consequence is added by these letters to the known history of their writers; but one or two important circumstances of such history are emphasized and corroborated. There are, for instance, several passages in the letters of Dorothy Wordsworth which abundantly prove, what has been proved before to the satisfaction of most persons who are fitted to judge such matters, that Mrs. Coleridge's temper, manners, and constitution of mind rendered it a simple impossibility for a man of Coleridge's nature to live with her, if he was to live at all; and they further prove that it was not until after years of dutiful and vain endeavour that he despairingly abandoned the attempt. 'Poor soul,' writes Dorothy Wordsworth, 'he had a struggle of many years, striving to bring Mrs. C. to a change of temper and something like communion with him. He is now, I trust, effectually convinced that he has no power of this sort. . . . While he imagined he had anything to hope for, no wonder that his disappointments made him so (miserable). But suppose him once reconciled to that one great want, an utter want of sympathy, I believe he may live in peace and quiet. . . . Coleridge is as little fitted for her as she for him, and I am truly sorry for her.' Later on: 'She has agreed to the separation; but in a letter which we have received to-night he tells us that she breaks out into outrageous passions, and urges continually that one argument (in fact the only one which has the least effect on her mind), that this person and that person and everybody will talk.'

Again, 'She gives but a very gloomy account of Coleridge's health; but this in her old way, without the least feeling or sense of his sufferings.' Marriage that was not a compact of love was worse than death to a man of such extreme sensibility as Coleridge. Had it been only a compact 'in which one party loved and the other condescended to be so treated', he could have borne it. But Mrs. Coleridge would not 'condescend to be so treated'; and she certainly gave him fair notice of that fact when she responded, in the days of their wooing, to a somewhat ridiculous display of adoration on her lover's part, by exclaiming 'Get oop, Coleridge!'

> 'Tis weary work enforcing love
> On one who has no need thereof,
> And honour on the lowlihead
> Of ignorance!

This marriage of a most tender heart and meteoric spirit with a creature of frost could have but one ending; and the fault was not in separating, but in having come together.

In the course of these letters lights are cast upon the origin and intention of several famous poems; and some of Wordsworth's analyses of his own verses resemble nothing else in literature so much as similar analyses by Dante of his own sonnets in the *Vita Nuova*. It is a pity to have to say it; but it appears to us that the prose account by 'Mr. Luff, of Patterdale, to his wife', enclosed in an epistle of Wordsworth's to Sir George Beaumont, of the incident commemorated by the poet in 'Fidelity', almost surely confirms the suggestion we once heard made by a cynical critic, that the faithful dog who was found watching by his

master's bones, three months after his death by a fall over a precipice—

> How nourished there through that long time
> He knows who gave that love sublime—

had nourished him- or rather herself (for she had given birth to a litter of puppies while watching) on the body of the object of her devotion. 'She is,' writes Mr. Luff, 'in good condition; and, what is more, had whelped a pup which from its size must have lived some weeks, but when found was lying dead by the bones. The bones are completely freed from flesh and perfectly white and dry. The head can nowhere be found. The arms, one thigh, and a leg were all that remained in the clothes. All the rest were scattered about here and there.' In the face of such evidence, surely the great poet's simplicity is only equalled by that of Mr. Luff, who adds: 'I wonder whether poor Fan's affection would under similar circumstances have equalled that of the little spaniel.'

We quote one more of the already innumerable definitions of 'genius', because it is a pleasure to find in the words of so great an authority as Coleridge a corroboration of a view more than once advocated in these pages, that genius is nothing other than high, prompt, and invincible good sense: 'The sum total of all intellectual excellence is good sense and method. When these have passed into the instinctive readiness of habit, when the wheel revolves so rapidly that we cannot see it revolve at all, then we call the combination genius. But in all modes alike, and in all professions, the two sole component parts even of genius are good sense and method.'

Coleridge's letters to the Beaumonts contain many novel remarks proceeding from the simple and supreme good sense of genius. Concerning fame, for example: 'To seek it is even a solemn duty for men endowed with more than ordinary powers of mind. First, as multiplying the ways and chances by which a useful work comes into the hands of such as are prepared to avail themselves of it; secondly, as securing for such a work that submissiveness of heart, that docility, without which nothing really good can be really acquired; and, lastly, because the individuality of the author, with all the associations connected with his name and history, adds greatly to the effect of a work.' Again: 'Were virtue as active by energy of will as vice is *by the necessity of its own restlessness*, it would be omnipotent.' Of Addison: 'I both love and admire Addison, and deem him inimitable in his own kind of excellence, and that a very high one. But it has done its work—nay, more, it has gone beyond it, and produced a passion for the unconnected in the minds of Englishmen.'

Throughout these volumes there breathes an air of pure morality and unconscious high manners which should make them acceptable to a much wider circle than the merely literary one.

DREAMS

[*St. James's Gazette*, May 7, 1887.]

Dreams have not yet had their due in the systems either of moralists or psychologists. Life is divided into states of action and perception. The waking

condition is almost exclusively the time of action, though not altogether so. St. Augustine notes, for example, that it is sometimes possible, in dreams, for a man who is habitually watchful over himself to resist the movements of the senses, and to refuse the consent of the will to the tempting imagery aroused by them in sleep. But, as a rule, the will is wholly passive in dreams and irresponsible for all that passes in them. Inasmuch, then, as a man is his will, and becomes more or less a man by compelling it to good or abandoning it to evil, his waking and active hours are most real. But it is in dreams, or in what the world regards as of little more substance and consequence—those waking moments of perception and emotion which come and go like dreams, those 'visionary gleams' that cease for most persons with the times of childhood and virginal love—that we find ourselves in contact with another kind of reality which, little as moralists have dwelt on the fact, is the essential complement of the major reality of action. To gain felicity and to avoid infelicity is the primary motive of most men's lives; and it is a powerful and legitimate secondary motive in the least selfish. But, in order that felicity and infelicity may become the mighty motive-powers which they are intended to be, they must be known; and the man who remembers, reverences, and often dwells upon the heaven which 'lies about us in our infancy', which transfigured soul and sense in the time of his howsoever 'foolish' first-love, and of which the poignant rays have probably never shone with such splendour as in the few and far-between visitations of angelic power, in sleep, will find in such experiences an aid to rectitude and beauty of life of

quite incalculable price; and only second in power to these sweet lures to righteousness will he find those moments of reasonable or unreasonable, waking or sleeping, suffering and terror, which also come to all men and reveal to them capacities and future possibilities of suffering far beyond those which arise from physical pain, the death of beloved persons, or any of the other ordinary calamities of life. These revelations of possible evil act as most efficacious warnings to such as are tampering with their one opportunity of life.

The exceedingly transitory character of these experiences of the realities of spiritual perception takes nothing from their serviceableness, but is rather a condition of it. The energy of the will acting on belief of that which is not at the moment perceived, the 'victory of faith', which every man is winning who is doing his duty because it is his duty and without immediate reward, would vanish were the immense possible results of good and evil sensibly present to his consciousness. Happy, says St. Bernard, is the man who has known in his whole life but half a minute of the felicity of an 'affective'—i. e. sensitive—love of the Highest Good. Happy, not because such an experience increases the happiness of mortal life, which is, indeed, diminished and deadened thereby; for 'no man can see God and live', as without such vision he might have lived, in the ordinary delights of life; but happy because, when such graces are cherished as they should be, the faith whereby the will thenceforth works is faith indeed, containing in potency, though not in perception, 'the substance of things hoped for, the being evident of things unseen.'

Such apprehensions are given to all men. They are

part of the 'light which lighteth every man', and they render the possibility of redemption from his natural corruption a universal gift, and not the privilege of any particular Church. That missionary was a fool or a profane jester who said that he could only excite his savages to a desire for heaven by representing it to them as 'a perpetual feast of buffalo's flesh well chewed by a squaw'. The religious rites of the veriest savages contain hints of the same mystic apprehensions of the possibilities of life as are shadowed forth by Greek and Indian myths and the rites of the Christian Churches; and who shall assert that the savage who remains a child all his life must be peculiarly incapable of the power of original vision, which is the special privilege of childhood, though he is wholly without power of uttering it?

Those who have reflected upon the experience of dreams must have become aware that the distinction of the corporeal and spiritual senses is not a mere doctrine but a manifest fact. It is the 'spiritual body' that enjoys and suffers in dreams. Time, again, in dreams, is not the time of nature; but it exists and is measured, as St. Thomas Aquinas says that it exists and is measured in eternity: that is, as and by the succession of perceptions. What, in waking moments, would be centuries of agony or felicity is sometimes actually endured and appears as the duration of centuries in a minute of sleep. . . .

To refuse to give to dreams the weight they deserve as being often among the most impressive and even life-affecting parts of man's experience, is stupidity too great to be argued with. If to dream is to dwell in unrealities, not knowing them for such, what is

the life of many but an uninterrupted dream ? The wise, however, will own, with Goethe, ' They are not shadows which produce a dream. I know they are eternal, for they ARE.' He who has known, even once in his life, the *somnus Endymionis*, in which the Queen of Purity has visited him as being also the Queen of Love, lifting his ideal, if not his way of life, for ever after, and convincing him that the felicity of the spirit and its senses is as far above the best of the waking life of the body as the electric light is above that of a smoky torch, will have discarded the ignorant distinction between realities and dreams, and will understand how

> Real are the dreams of gods, and smoothly pass
> Their pleasure in a long immortal dream.

SWEDENBORG

[*St. James's Gazette*, April 16, 1886.]

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG is perhaps the most inscrutable figure in the whole sphere of literature. From Coleridge, who pronounced him to be ' the man of ten centuries ', to the materialist, for whom he is little better than an idiot, the shades of opinion concerning him are innumerable; yet the most reverential critic or disciple is almost as far as the most contemptuous from being able to make a full and rational estimate of this extraordinary man. Certainly we are very far from pretending to have acquired the power of doing so, from the careful study of a mass of writing which constitutes almost a library in itself. But the waters of a lake of which one cannot

see the boundaries, and which is full of strange rocks and barren islets, may be as good to quench the thirst —of some at least—as those of a wayside spring; and some of our readers to whom Swedenborg may be but a name, and that not an alluring one, may by a few remarks have curiosity aroused and prejudice diminished so far as to induce them to judge for themselves the value of this vast reservoir of psychological speculation.

There is a considerable body of professed 'Swedenborgians' in England, and a very much larger and ever-increasing society of them in the United States. But nothing was further from Swedenborg's intention than to form a sect; and he would have regarded those as the truest of his followers who, remaining in their own Church, endeavour to acquire a more vivid and effectual apprehension of its doctrines through his modes of viewing them. Swedenborg professed himself a member of the Church of England, although born and bred a Lutheran; for he maintained that there was no other Church which confessed essential truth with so little restraint of intellectual freedom; and he would probably have had little sympathy with the prevailing mental character, could he have foreseen it, of the sect which has taken his name. The one aim of all his religious teaching was to raise men's views of nature by representing it as the ultimate development of spirit, and, conversely, as the only means by which we can arrive at any 'real apprehension'—to use Newman's phrase—of the world of spirit. But, in maintaining with Plato, St. Paul, and all the greatest psychologists down to Hegel, that 'the invisible things of the spirit' can only be known

by 'the things which are seen', he also maintained with them that the 'letter' of the gospel of nature 'killeth'; and he would have been horrified to have foreseen that many of his nominal disciples would have used his doctrines rather to degrade and materialize spirit than to raise and spiritualize nature.

To many persons who would refuse the name of philosopher to Swedenborg, he cannot but be of great interest as an artist of the Blake type. A Blake upon a colossal scale, he intermingles with much that is feeble and absurd much more of which the imaginative insight is so extraordinary that his descriptions have the effect of the actual vision of heights and depths of pain and joy, of beauty and terror, such as few have even dreamt of; and, whatever we may think about his assertion of the actual reality of these visions, they have, in common with all that is greatest in art, this real use—that they reveal to the mind and heart unknown capacities, and suggest that such capacities, although they may lie hidden from our present consciousness, do not exist for nothing or without a possibility that they may be destined for exercise and fulfilment. The 'Heaven and Hell' and 'Conjugal Love' contain the most remarkable example in this kind; and the Swedenborg Society has done good service in publishing translations of these and other works of Swedenborg at the price of paper and print.

Swedenborg's career and his literary labours were pretty equally divided between natural science and religion or psychology. He attained high official position under, and was ennobled by, Charles XII of Sweden on account of his scientific services; but his

best claims as a natural philosopher could not be estimated at the time, and there have been many adverse causes and interests which have since operated against the general recognition of his extraordinary qualities. It has been well remarked that some of the very greatest discoveries of science have been acts of imaginative insight rather than results of laborious inference. Five years before Herschel was born, and fifty before he applied his great telescope to the mechanism of our galaxy and the firmaments beyond our own, Swedenborg had asserted that there were many firmaments like our , and had indicated the position of our solar system in relation to the 'Milky Way', and had also declared that this huge congeries of 'fixed' stars was in a perpetual flux. He similarly anticipated La Grange's theory of the stability of the solar system, and Laplace's speculation on the formation of that system. In physiology, Swedenborg's researches and speculations were no less laborious and profound; and among other anticipations of subsequent science was that of the circulation of the blood: a doctrine which, with others of more or less importance, he contents himself with clearly and briefly enunciating, and then leaving to take care of itself; which it appears it was not able to do, failing to blow its own trumpet loud enough. 'On the whole,' says one of Swedenborg's most capable and impartial critics and biographers, 'we may admit these (physiological) works to be a grand consolidation of human knowledge; an attempt to combine and reorganize the opinions of all the schools of medicine since the days of Hippocrates. These works, however, are a dead letter to the medical profession, or only known

to its erudite members through the misrepresentations of Haller.'

In his fifty-eighth year Swedenborg professed to have received a direct mandate from Heaven to labour henceforth exclusively in the interest of religion. This mandate he obeyed to his dying day with unwearying industry, and with an apparently absolute absence of enthusiasm. Nothing can be more dismally prosaic or more 'damnable' than the 'iteration' with which he pursued his task; and 'visions' which might have moved Dante to surpass himself in music, and doctrines which heave the language of Prophets and Apostles into billows of rhythm, are described and propounded by him in terms as nearly as possible resembling those of a police report or a conveyancer's statement. Strange, however, to say, the greatness of the matter seems, in Swedenborg's writings, to justify the baseness of the manner; and it is a sort of art which thus presents to us diamonds of thought in settings of lead. It helps to impress the reader with the writer's conviction that the thought and the vision are not *his*.

HEGEL

[*St. James's Gazette*, March 22, 1886.]

There is no modern philosopher who has exerted or who is exerting so much influence upon the highest thought as Hegel; yet, owing partly to his bad style, rather than his real obscurity—which, though great, is not nearly so great as those who have never tried to read him suppose—he influences most of our best thinkers only indirectly, and by infiltration through

the minds of a very few who think the acquisition of great stores of the purest gold worth the trouble of some quartz-crushing. Coleridge's philosophical standpoint was, as is well known, entirely Hegelian, and he can scarcely be acquitted of some want of candour in not acknowledging the fact of his indebtedness more fully than he did. Goethe, who says he 'always kept himself clear of philosophy', did not affect to keep himself clear of Hegel, whose 'judgements as a critic', he declares, 'have always been excellent'. It is concerning these that we have now chiefly to speak, and it is curious that in these Hegel is commonly as lucid and intelligible as he is difficult in most of his writings. His philosophy is, in its substance and end, simple and final. His data are such as can be granted by all clear and healthy intellects; and his conclusions are judgements of infallible soundness and practical use in religion, morals, politics, and art: but it is in the journey from the data to the conclusions that most readers find themselves nowhere, like Prince Firouz Schah on his enchanted horse.

Mr. Hastie has sought to interest English readers in Hegel by introducing them to the philosopher's great work on aesthetics;[1] but it seems a pity that he should have chosen for translation the preliminary chapter, which is the most difficult part of the whole book. There is, however, quite enough in it that is popularly intelligible to justify Mr. Hastie in his

[1] *The Philosophy of Art: an Introduction to the Scientific Study of Aesthetics.* By Hegel and C. L. Michelet. Translated from the German by W. Hastie, B.D. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1886.)

enterprise and in his introductory comments, which, though expressed with that almost lyric enthusiasm which is inspired in many young Scotchmen by the contemplation of the imperfectly comprehensible, are in the main just and to the point. This translation of Hegel's preliminary chapter is sufficient to convince its readers, if they were not convinced before, first that there really are principles in art, and secondly that nearly all our English criticism is void of such principles. Compared with Hegel's grasp of the truth of art, much of our most admirable criticism appears to be little better than very tender but imperfect feminine appreciation—all love and little or no light, and therefore liable to change with the critic's mood and fancy. The very purpose of art (which Hegel declares, in words that ought to be written in letters of gold, is ' to bring the highest interests of the spirit into consciousness ') is only obscurely and occasionally recognized by our four or five best writers on the subject—men who have the power of saying everything, but who, not having any ground of ascertained principle to stand upon, have little or nothing to say. The consequence is, that sensible persons, whether artists or lovers of art, are more and more disposed to doubt whether any substantial good can be derived from criticism, and whether the amount of momentary and inconsiderate pleasure to be had from a picture, poem, or piece of sculpture is not the only test of its merit. But true criticism has very solid and important uses. It can never teach a true artist what to do or how to do it ; but it can teach him what to avoid. It can teach him that a mere pathological study in verse or colour—such as are many of our most admired poems

and pictures—is not a work of art in the true sense, however exquisite the workmanship and touching or sensational the result. Madness, for instance, ought not to be the theme of a poem; though, as in *Lear* and *Hamlet*, it may be an invaluable accessory. The theme must be health. Melancholy must not be painted for itself, but must be subordinated to the idea of resignation or joy. Disaster and misery must appear as the glorification of justice, or as vistas to more than countervailing good, if they are to constitute true tragedy.

It cannot be denied that many artists of high instincts and great technical powers might be the better for these and other such landmarks of principle as are scattered plentifully through the pages of Hegel. Nor would the artistic public be less benefited; for it is a certain fact, and one which almost any one may test by his own experience, that the reality of enjoyment depends very much upon a sort of external conscience. We enjoy the more for being sure that we enjoy what ought to be enjoyed; and, when violations of right principle are pointed out, the senses themselves very soon reject as nauseous the things which before delighted them. Such correction of the public taste can never be the result of studying those writers among ourselves who put forth as criticism that which, however beautifully and subtly it may be expressed, is little more than an attempt to describe the feelings produced in the writers by the works they profess to judge.

The relation of art to nature and actual life has never been more fully or forcibly defined than in the following passage:

To experience in common life we are accustomed to give the name and value of reality and truth, in contrast to art as wanting in such truth and reality. But, when more carefully considered, it is just this whole sphere of the inner and outer world of mere experience that, instead of being called the world of reality in a stricter sense than the world of art, is to be regarded as a mere appearance and as crude illusion. The true reality is only to be found beyond and above the immediate experiences of sensation and external objects. For what is truly real is only what has being in itself and for itself; and this must be what is substantial, both in nature and mind. Such substantial being is, indeed, presented (in art) as appearing in experience; but in this form of existence it continues to maintain its own essential being. . . . The domination of the universal powers that are involved in all being, is just what art emphasizes and shows. In the common world, without and within, the essential reality of being has also a manifestation; but it is in the form of a chaos of accidental things, confused in the immediate perceptions of sense and disturbed by the arbitrariness of circumstances, events, and characters. The mere seeming and illusiveness of this crude and perishing world are removed by art from the reality underlying these appearances; and it puts in their place a higher reality born of the spirit. Far, then, from being mere shows or outside appearances, the productions of art, in contrast to the things of the common world, possess the higher reality and the truer being.

Some of our readers, who may not be able to read Hegel in the very difficult original, may be glad to know that there is an admirable French translation, in five volumes, of the *Aesthetics*, by M. Ch. Bénard.

THE MORALITY OF 'EPIPSYCHIDION'

[*St. James's Gazette*, November 13, 1886.]

In his lecture of last Monday, the Clark Lecturer of English Literature at Cambridge[1] had the courage to assert, and to maintain his assertion by detailed proof, that the poem of all poems which the more fanatical worshippers of Shelley swear by is essentially and technically bad art. Among the unusually large audience of male and female students who attended this lecture there were probably a good many who, being convinced against their will, went away of the same opinion still; but in the artistic consciences even of these some of the things said by the lecturer must stick, and will perhaps bring conviction in maturer years. The lecture was made the more effective by the enthusiastic appreciation shown in it for those marvellous qualities which Shelley has never manifested more clearly than in *Epipsychidion*.

It requires as much courage now to defend morality before an audience of enlightened young men and women as it used to do to attack it; and it almost took one's breath away to hear a lecturer in the great Hall of Trinity College declaring, in the face of Dons, undergraduates, and young ladies from Newnham, that *Epipsychidion* is full of bad morality, and that bad morality is bad art. The lecturer made the most liberal allowances for Shelley: conceding to those of his admirers who desire to maintain the supremacy of their poet without altogether casting off the Ten Commandments, that it was probably 'only his fun' when he affirmed that his affection for his wife was

[1] Mr. Edmund Gosse.

frozen in a moment by a glance from the 'sleepy eyes' of a young lady residing (against her inclinations) as a parlour boarder in a convent, and accustomed to apostrophize the flowers and the stars in the presence of chance visitors. But he justly added that such fun, expressed in the most exquisite words and with all the solemnity of the tragic Muse, is likely to be taken *au sérieux* by spouses who have become accustomed to the charms of their partners and are disposed for a little change; and he mildly suggested that the Platonic love which always aspires to and culminates in bodies as well as souls being

Confused in passion's golden purity

is a little too much of a joke, especially when the parties are comfortably married to other people. The lecturer furthermore pointed out that the expression of the poet's passion is not only immoral but unwholesome. It is full of the flavour of 'base, self-pitying tears': an excusable luxury in calf-love, but which is not attractive in a man or in the *chef-d'œuvre* of a great poet. These faults are found, 'like the track of a snail', among most of the exquisite parterres of Shelley's love-poetry. They are never found among the greatest poets; though these have sometimes been as free-spoken as Shelley, and often a great deal more coarse. The glory of art is in showing life as rejoicing in and completed by law; and the prayer of the great poet is that of the great prophet: 'Order all things in me strongly and sweetly from end to end.' After having ventured to flout that very large proportion of Shelley's most ardent admirers who glorify him in their hearts, not so much as a poet, as

a revolutionist in the spheres both of political and moral order, the lecturer went on to indicate other defects which somewhat seriously derogate from the position of absolute supremacy which is claimed for Shelley as an artist by many not otherwise 'unsensible' persons. He complained that in several of Shelley's longest and most famous poems the thought and action make no progress, but are like the splendid splutter of a catherine-wheel spinning in station: and that images and expressions which Spenser or Milton might have envied—such as

> Sweet as stops
> Of planetary music heard in trance—

often alternate with platitudes and the most jejune diction; especially an almost childish fondness for long Latin words—such as 'interlunar', 'ante-natal', and the like—which can only be used with poetical effect on such rare occasions that it seems almost like a plagiarism to employ them if they have ever been used in verse by any one else. 'Interlunar', for example, ought to have been regarded as having fulfilled its poetical function after having once appeared in Milton's 'vacant interlunar cave'; and to call a young lady an 'incarnation of April' and an 'incarnation of the Sun', within the limits of one short poem, conveys no particular idea, except that the poet's command of words and sense of their value sometimes fail him altogether, even in those flood-tides of passionate sentiment in which his ordinary powers of language are almost incomparable.

It is hard to have to say hard things of so splendid a writer; and the Clark Lecturer must have felt it

to be so, though he carefully reminded his audience that he was speaking to them only from the artistic and apart from the moral standpoint, except in so far as a loose and invertebrate morality is a fault in art. Shelley, however, has to answer for more than inartistic views of right and wrong. His writings are the most powerful moral solvent which the literature of our century has produced ; and that is saying much. Their power in this way lies mainly in the circumstance of the manifest absence of all malefic intention, and in their professed enthusiasm for the very good into the heart of which they softly and imperceptibly eat—as a snail's mild juices will sink a hole in a stone wall faster than could be done by nitric acid. The doctrine of the practical supremacy of emotional love, and its independence of objective truth and customary moral standards, is immensely attractive to a large part of the youth of both sexes ; but, if followed, it can only land them in a marsh of effeminate and selfish sensuality, and leave them there with weakened intellects and perceptions seared by pleasure to all the sources of generous and true delight. This doctrine led Shelley by a logical necessity to assail the institution of monogamic marriage ; and yet, where that institution has not existed or does not exist, that very love which is the object of his idolatry does not exist. Love cannot live where it is habitually regarded as the foundation of an impermanent and divided relationship, and it must come to be so regarded unless the opposite view is adopted and upheld by moral and social law ; and no amount of failure in individual cases—whether through the fault or the misfortune of the individuals concerned—can justify

attacks upon an institution which enforces the observation, at least in form, of that ideal standard of love between the sexes which is as necessary to the highest felicity as it is to the highest uses of society.

Great has been the failure of every poet who has renounced his affirmative function as seer in order to denounce and reform abuses. The real poet is, indeed, the greatest of all reformers; but it is not upon the platform, in the pulpit, or on the stump that he carries out his work. His business is to embody truth, justice, and goodness in the living and alone convincing form of beauty, and to make them beloved by showing that they are lovely; and, if he represents folly, vice, or any kind of uncomeliness, it is not in order to contemplate and to judge such evils in themselves, but in order to supply foils which shall set forth more strongly the irrefragable splendour of truth embodied in sensible loveliness.

POETICAL COUPS-MANQUÉS

[*St. James's Gazette*, April 12, 1887.]

There seems at the first glance to be an element of unreason in the permanent decisions of gods, men, and columns, as to whether a versifier is or is not a poet. That they should not tolerate anything like an unbroken level of mediocrity, is obviously just; but why do they sometimes pardon a large admixture of dullness or even imbecility, for the sake of a gleam here and there of genius, and yet so often condemn to oblivion writers whose passing inspirations are relieved, not by the darkness of imbecility, as in the instance of Blake,

or by dullness, as in that of Coleridge, but by the alternation of clouds of vulgar or pretentious commonplace and ordinary ignorance of human life? Why are the names of Bailey, Alexander Smith, and Sydney Dobell, for instance, things of the past, notwithstanding the journalistic enthusiasm with which they were at first received, and which was justified, so far as passages of beauty and power, such as have been sufficient to establish some minor but permanent poetical reputations, could justify it? It seems to be tacitly agreed among those who are the arbiters of fame, that as lack of courage is fatal to the general character of a man, and lack of chastity to that of a woman, so want of taste, that shows itself in bumptiousness, priggishness, or any sort of vulgarity or philistinism, is finally condemnatory of a poet, though he may be guilty of almost any other sin with comparative impunity. The *Spectator* probably did more to damage George Eliot's *Spanish Gipsy* by beginning its eulogium with the words 'This is an important poem', than the rest of its praise and the praise of all the other critics could make up for. Bailey, Alexander Smith, and Dobell all started with the avowed intention of writing 'important' poems; and the failure of their confident attempts to do this has so tickled the sense of absurdity in that very influential but quiet class of readers who make fame, that it is doubtful whether such claims as these poets really have to our respect will ever be admitted. If, as seems to be generally allowed at the present day, a man may be a great poet who has the power of saying everything in a trenchant and picturesque way, although he may have nothing of his own that is worth saying, then Alexander Smith and

Philip Bailey were poets. They had both of them a remarkable flow of words, and were both capable of sometimes seeing and describing inanimate nature with a clearness and vigour which might have secured them a niche in the porch, at least, of the Temple of Fame, if they had not aspired to a place in the sanctuary. The effect of a mistaken estimate of himself has been still more remarkable in the case of Sydney Dobell, who has far better claims to the rank of a poet than either of his two ambitious cotemporaries. These were almost absolutely ignorant of the true poet's science—man. When they attempted to describe men and women they were uniformly absurd; but Dobell wrote some passages which, had they been found in Wordsworth or any other of our great poets of humanity, would have been famous; and it is in order to aid in securing, if possible, a place in future anthologies for them that this notice is written. Our readers will require no apology for a larger amount of extract than it is our use to give when they have read the following:

Of a Lady

Herself informed
The jarring elements, till, as her sway
No outer sign enforced, no shows of power,
Nor but a golden sweet necessity
Sovereign, unseen, the subject heart gave like
Confession. Not as they did a queen
With sudden shout, but as two friends regard
A rising star, and speak not of it while
It fills their gaze. The loud debate grew low,
What was unseemly, chastened, and the fear
Of beauty waking her moralities
Sent through the adjusted limbs the long-forgot
Ambition to be fair. Nor sex, nor rank,

Nor age, nor changed condition, did absolve
Her rule, which whatsoever was remote
From sin the more saluted. . . .
. . . She was much like the moon
Seen in the daytime, that by day receives
Like joy with us, but when our night is dark,
Lit by the changeless sun we cannot see,
Shineth no less. And she was like the moon,
Because the beams that brighten'd her passed o'er
Our dark heads, and we knew them not for light
Till they came back from hers ; and she was like
The moon, that whatsoe'er appeared her wane
Or crescent was no loss or gain to her
But in the changed beholder.

Of Dante

Who wove his web
And thrust it into hell, and drew it forth
Immortal, having burned all that could burn,
And leaving only what shall still be found
Untouched, nor with the smell of fire upon it,
Under the final ashes of the world.

Of Truth

That, partial to her sex, made woman free
Even of her inmost cell ; but man walks round
The outer courts, and by the auspices
And divinations of the augur Reason,
Knows her chaste will, her voice and habit better,
With a sure science, more abstract and pure,
Than she who runs by instinct to her knee.

Of His Mistress

My first love and my last, so far, so near,
So strong, so weak, so comprehensible
In these encircling arms, so undescribed
In any thought that shapes thee ; so divine,
So softly human, that to either stretch

Extreme and furthest tether of desire,
It finds thee still.

THE PAST

I have linger'd by the Past,
As by a death-bed, with unwonted love,
And such forgiveness as we bring to those
Who can offend no more.

In the eight or nine thousand lines which constitute the 'selected' poems of Sydney Dobell, just published,[1] probably not two hundred could be found up to the mark of the above quotations; but had he written nothing but these, he would have deserved to be not altogether forgotten. Unfortunately these noble passages have to be hunted up, not out of a mere wilderness of inoffensive rubbish, but out of a jungle of other passages each of which annoys and pains by such a sense of pretentious strain and unconscious failure, that it is almost impossible for any one of trained poetic taste to push his way through it.

WILLIAM BARNES

[*St. James's Gazette*, October 9, 1886; December 19, 1887.]

I

THE REVEREND WILLIAM BARNES, the 'Dorsetshire Poet', died, at an extreme old age, the day before yesterday; and, if it be safe to say so of any writer in his own time, it is safe to say that in his departure one of our country's classics has gone from us. More than thirty years ago, when Barnes was an unknown name,

[1] In *The Canterbury Poets*. (London: Walter Scott, 1887.)

the writer of these lines was praising him (supposing him to be unknown) to one of the most just and generous of the critics of our time—a critic who did not wait for a man to become famous before he ventured to declare him worthy of fame; and the reply was, 'Yes, there has been no such art since Horace.' Since then many of those whose praise is best worth having have avowed in private something like this opinion; and though it is strangely true that Barnes is unknown to thousands who pretend to a good knowledge of contemporary literature, we have no fear that he will lose the honour he so well deserves.

Barnes, of course, bears no resemblance whatever to Horace except in his art, which is simply, in its kind, consummate. His poems, which are of three sorts—lyric, idyll, and eclogue—are all alike in the finish which shows not the slightest sign of labour. He wrote nothing but his best, and the best of its kind; and if one poem is more admirable than another, it is owing solely to the superiority of the subject.

Barnes, though a clergyman of the Church of England, had not received his education at either of the universities. He cannot be said to have risen from the position of a rustic, for that was the position of his choice. He preached to his little congregation in the Dorset dialect in which he wrote his poems (and it was an odd and startling thing to hear him); and his poems were no dilettante adoptions of that dialect for the nonce, but were bona fide productions of a man to whom that dialect was his most natural language and who wrote for readers or hearers—for he recited his poetry with prodigious success to assemblages of the

neighbouring carters and shepherds—who could understand no other.

He acquired so extensive an acquaintance with languages, and such insight into the secrets of their origin and construction, that he earned the respectful notice of students like Max Müller. This learning he seems to have acquired not so much for any of the ordinary motives for which a man becomes a scholar, as in order to satisfy a profound delight in contemplating those obscure echoes and imitations of realities by which language in its infancy is rendered almost pure poetry, and to feel and preserve the magic charm of which is the poet's greatest art when he has to deal with the fully developed tongue. Barnes loved his own dialect and made it the vehicle of his thoughts and feelings, not only because it was his native language, but also because he considered it to be the least corrupted form of English and therefore the best poetic vehicle. That he was right, from whatever reason, in using it and no other is abundantly shown by the result of his one departure from his rule. It was at the persuasion of a London publisher that he consented to abandon for once his native Doric, and to adopt the publisher's views of what was good for popularity and purse. The *Poems of Rural Life in Common English*, though still better than any other recent poet's work in the same kind, are very common English indeed, when compared with his native woodnotes wild.

Many persons allow themselves to be robbed of the delight of reading Barnes's poems by the fancy that it would require serious labour to overcome the difficulty of the dialect. There is no such difficulty. Barnes's dialect does not differ so much from common English

as does the dialect in which are written those of Burns's poems, which are almost universally read in England. Half an hour's reading overcomes all sense of oddity; and though the poet has provided his readers with a complete glossary of his Dorsetshire words, few readers would find much need of using it; for the context commonly interprets the unusual word or is able to give sufficient pleasure without its interpretation.

No single quotation that could be given in a notice like this from Barnes's poems would seem to justify what has been said in praise of them. There is in them a most sweet and prevailing perfume of the simplest country life, which is rather the cumulative effect of many poems than the charm of any separate one; and the astonishing freedom from effort, which strikes a critical reader more than anything else, strikes exactly in proportion to the space through which such freedom is sustained.

Barnes, in his person and conversation, had precisely the dignity and simplicity of his peculiar culture, and nothing more nor less. Many a son of the soil has manners as good as those of Barnes, and many a highly polished gentleman has worse. He was gentle, true, and somewhat dull in his talk, seeming to have little to say besides that which he had uttered in his own incomparable way once and for all. And he did not seem to covet fame for his poems beyond the narrow circle of those in whose dialect they were written.

II

That Barnes should have had his 'Life' written, in at least one biggish octavo, was a matter of course;

though a ' biographical notice ' of thirty or forty pages, written by one or other of those of his friends who are also skilful pen-wielders—say, Thomas Hardy—might have contained all that need have been recorded of him, and more than all that is effectually recorded of him in Mrs. Baxter's book,[1] which is defective in the animation of style that good biographical writing requires, and which is grievously ' padded '. For example, each of its eighteen chapters is preceded by one of Barnes's poems, given in its entirety, and having even less reference than that of an ordinary motto to the contents of the chapter following. The best that can be said of the bulk of the volume is that it fairly represents the personality of Barnes ; which was simple, moral, externally neither cold nor sympathetic, and, except as it comes out in his poetry, uninteresting to outsiders : lacking as it did the general expressiveness which the possession of genius usually gives. His letters have as little life in them as those of Burns, though they are wholly free from the inflated unreality of the latter. Neither does the sweet and keen animation which inspired his verse almost uniformly, through the sixty-five years during which he exercised his functions as a poet, appear to have made itself felt in any of his prose writing, or in his personal converse ; which seems to have been very much what might have been expected from an ordinarily good, capable, and self-educated man who had spent his life between the cares of a country school and the promulgation of more or less crotchety philological views. Mrs. Baxter's own share of the work is very much of a piece with the

[1] *The Life of William Barnes, Poet and Philologist.* By his Daughter, Lucy Baxter. (London : Macmillan & Co., 1887.)

commonplace character of her father's prose; and she records many things which were scarcely worth recording — complimentary sayings and letters of persons whose opinions are of small weight, and accounts of little family incidents and journeys which require a charm of style, wholly wanting in these accounts, to give them any public interest.

Barnes came of a once well-to-do Dorsetshire family, the property of which was finally wasted by a grand-uncle, who was the guardian of John Barnes, the poet's father. John Barnes became a tenant-farmer, therefore, where his ancestors had been owners; and the future poet's youthful experience in the Vale of Blackmore was exactly that of the persons whose lives and feelings he describes with such incomparable vividness, tenderness, humour, and free artistic finish, in those 'Hwomely Rhymes' which are probably destined to take rank in the lists of fame with the best writings of Burns. William Barnes was a feeble little boy, with a bent towards poetry, given to him by his mother, who died while he was very young. Mrs. Baxter says 'he had the psychic hand': which we gather to mean was a hand 'quite unfitted for the manual labour of a farm'. His education, as far as it was conducted *ab extra*, was done at the village dame's school; and he could write so well by the time he was fourteen years old that he was then transferred to the desk of a local solicitor. In this occupation he continued for several years; employing his spare time in laying the foundation of that miscellaneous knowledge of languages which enabled him subsequently to propound and defend views which some eminent philologists have considered to be worthy of respect,

in acquiring a moderate proficiency in drawing and in copper and wood-engraving ('in 1826', he writes, 'I cut some little blocks for Mr. Baxter, a printer in Blackmore, and was mostly paid in bookbinding and cheeses'); and in trying his first flights as a poet, in verses addressed to his future wife, Miss Julia Miles. At the age of twenty-three he left Dorchester to conduct a school at Mere, in Wiltshire; and some twelve years afterwards, he returned to Dorchester to carry on the same profession there. As early as 1829—his own years being those of the century—he published 'An Etymological Glossary of English words of Foreign Derivation, so arranged that the Learner is enabled to acquire the Meaning of many at once'; and from this time forth he continued to write and publish, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and elsewhere, a long series of articles and essays on kindred subjects—a catalogue of which, occupying nine pages, is given by Mrs. Baxter. There is nothing in this 'Life' to show that Barnes ever took any interest in the greatest of all poetical literatures—the English—except in so far as it helped or opposed his 'Anglo-Saxon' predilections. Had he done so, it would scarcely have been possible that, up to the last, he should have gravely advocated the return of 'the bird-voice and the blast of our omniloquent tongue' to its infantine monosyllabic lispings. His extraordinary narrowness and insensibility in this regard had, however, the good effect of causing his original 'Dorset Dialect' to remain to the last what it was to him in his childhood—his own real language, and no dilettante adoption of a poetical 'Doric', such as the use of similar dialects has been in the hands of other modern poets who have tried to make English

rustics talk in their own style. Had Barnes been obliged to think of the language he was writing in, it would have been impossible for him to have caught and fixed, as he has done, the exquisite moods of pathos, humour, and natural affection, and the subtle and sweet replies of outward things to these moods, which abound in his verses more than in those of any living poet. Nor, indeed, had Barnes been able to feel, in their fullness, the passions of Lear and Juliet, which exhaust the resources of the mightiest and subtlest of languages, could he have felt the few and simple woodnotes of rustic nature with the single-minded intensity which renders his poems almost without a rival in their kind. He is a notable example at once of the limitation of genius and of its excellent results when such limitation is recognized by its possessor, as in our days, unhappily, it so seldom is. Had ambition led him to make a boast of his ' breadth ' of capacity, he would only have become one of our many literary quagmires, instead of being, as he is, a little rill of bright and perennial beauty.

But Barnes had so little conceit, and ambition was so far from being his literary motive, that when he was writing his very best he never seems to have counted upon a wider or higher public than was to be reached through the columns of the *Dorset County Chronicle*. In 1844, however, his verses attracted the attention of Mrs. Norton, Lady Dufferin, Sir Thomas Acland, and one or two other persons, whose good word introduced him to a more extensive but not more appreciative public than he already enjoyed among his native farmers and labourers; who read when they could read, and attended readings when they could not, and

gave abundant proofs of genuine intelligence of what was poetical in their own sphere.

Probably the most valuable fruit of Barnes's indefatigable philological studies was one upon which he valued himself least, namely the effect which the knowledge thus acquired of obscure and sometimes forgotten metres exercised upon his own metrical practice. With the exception of Mr. Swinburne, no poet of our century has been so much indebted to foreign metrical systems. Welsh, Saxon, Hebrew, Norse, Italian, and Persian movements are introduced, with no hint of their origin, into the 'Hwomely Rhymes', without the slightest diminution of their homeliness, and with great increase of their life, beauty, and naturalness.

Having been ordained many years before, in 1862 Barnes received the small living of Came from Mr. Seymour Dawson Damer. His school had been falling off, and this gift was a great and abiding relief from the fears of poverty which had begun to threaten him. His life after, as before, this event, was almost wholly without stirring incidents—except, indeed, such incidents as make the happiest life upon the whole a tragedy. His profoundly affectionate nature never got over the death of his wife, which occurred thirty-five years before his own. 'As years went on,' writes his daughter, 'his paroxysms of grief became less violent; but to the time of his death the word "Giulia" was written like a sigh at the end of each day's entry in his Italian journal.'

UNNATURAL LITERATURE

[*St. James's Gazette*, February 26, 1887.]

The literature that professes to represent life has three tolerably well-marked spheres of interest and excitement, and three modes of regarding good and evil. Art, when upholding the ideal directly, by the free representation of that order, or beauty, which is the true reality of humanity, or indirectly by the tragic exposition of the evils and hideousness of departure from that order, dwells in a region which, though comparatively free from agitation, appeals for the most part to feelings which are not the less lively for being often too deep for either smiles or tears. It appeals to a portion of our nature for which our current speech has no definite name, but which is called in Catholic philosophy the spiritual senses. These senses, by which truly human delights and sorrows are perceived, may be indefinitely sharpened by that asceticism of life and thought which—call it religion or virtue, or mere lofty prudence—is in fact nothing but the willing sacrifice of a lower and feebler good to a higher and more vigorous one. Every decent liver, from the ordinarily well-conducted and well-thinking man to a saint and contemplative like St. Francis, is more or less of an ascetic—that is, he daily denies something to the corporeal in favour of the spiritual; and in proportion as he does so he gets even his immediate reward, in the elevation of his pleasures and pains into a region which only looks dull to the sensualist because he has never had any of its experiences. This asceticism, moreover, in refusing disordered liberty to the natural

feelings and corporeal senses, endows those feelings and senses themselves with an acuteness that confers, unsought, the very delights and excitements which the sensual liver, in his search for them, tramples under his stupid hoof; so that love which keeps continence and law obtains from a smile or the touch of a hand an amount and intensity of sensible felicity which the lawless seeker for pleasure would give ten years' cost of his harem to taste for a moment.

Life is such a subtle, manifold, and infinite thing, that the degree of order (that is to say, ideality) which may be introduced into it is also infinite. The angels themselves, it is said, have still an unattained ideal for ever before them, and are for ever purifying themselves in order to approach it more nearly. To set before and excite man to the love and pursuit of their ideal life is the common object both of religion and of art, especially of literary art.

The second sphere of representative literature is one in which the present century has singularly excelled. It depicts ordinary society, with its average mixture of good and evil; relies for its attraction upon the pleasure we take in being made tranquil spectators of events and passions similar to those which have happened to or have agitated ourselves; and is upon the whole moral, though there may be no didactic intention, because, in any faithful representation of such events and passions, that which is good and true naturally asserts itself as more alluring than the evil and the false, even to those who, in the heat and agitation of the actual events and passions, would be likely to be found on the wrong side. In the matter especially of the minor morals—or 'manners'—which

constitute so large a part of the sum total of the good and evil of life, we owe a much larger debt of gratitude than is commonly thought due to the novelists of the time ; and it is matter for congratulation that writers of the stamp of Austen, Gaskell, Thackeray, and Hardy have a far larger and more enduring circulation among us than has yet been obtained by the too numerous writers who have endeavoured to supersede the natural and wholesome interests upon which such novelists as the above-named rely by appeals to a corrupt love of violent and abnormal excitements. If there were no other sign than the superior popularity of such writers, that alone would be sufficient to assure us that the domestic life and interests of the English people are as yet, upon the whole, sound and wholesome, and that its scandals are quite exceptional, though the lamentable publicity which is occasionally given to them confuses those simple folk who measure the wool by the cry. The literary test—which is, perhaps, of all the surest—would seem to indicate that profound moral corruption is not common except among the lower orders.

There are not wanting signs, however, in our literature that the love of violent, foul, and vicious excitements, which already taints all degrees of life in France and widely disgraces the governing classes in England, may soon assail our middle and upper ranks ; and that the acrid fumes of lust, cruelty, horror, and the infra-natural may gradually poison and supersede the mild and wholesome interests of average English life, even among those classes which are at present least corrupted. Several very clever writers have recently arisen in England and America who appeal neither to

the intellect nor the affections, but simply to the senses—that is to say, to the beast in man. And, of all beasts, that beast is the most terrible if he is once allowed to put himself in the foremost place. The wolf and the weasel kill not only to eat, but from the love of purposeless destruction; the man has that in him which delights not only in blood and wanton destruction, but in torment—torment not inflicted from revenge, but for the simple delight of beholding it; and to the fruitions of this horrible instinct, which tends to be developed in those who have destroyed in themselves the power of pure and natural enjoyments, are added, in the last degrees of human corruption, hellish epicureanisms of lust, the details of which have as yet, fortunately, only got fully uttered in ancient Latin and modern French. Wherever writers are not ashamed to write, and readers to read, narratives (fictions or otherwise) which depend for their interest mainly upon representations of cruelty, horror, or sensuality, or all three mixed, there the human beast has got loose; and from enjoyment of such representations to actual participation in the realities there is but one step, and that not a long one. The essential guilt is already involved in the foul and unnatural enjoyment by the imagination of such evil, which may be fully committed 'in the heart', though the external act may be hindered by habit, or fear, or prudence.

The English language has not yet been defiled by any original attempt to sound the depths of that Tophet whose secrets are sought and exposed with such gusto by our neighbours across the Channel; and it must be confessed that the recent outpouring of

unnatural literature in England and America seems rather to have been excited by a desire to write saleable books than by the ardour which inspires the French apostolate of blood and lust. The nerves that are dead to caresses crave to be scratched; and the worst that can be said of that sort of English writing of which *She* is the latest specimen is that it seeks to satisfy that craving by preternatural horror. The portentous thing is that there should be a very large and ever-increasing English public in whom an itch for horror, cruelty, and unnatural phenomena of all sorts, has taken the place of human sensibility, and to whom the hardest scratching is the greatest gratification. The evil, if not arrested, inevitably goes much further. When once that love for what is fair, good, simple, real, and honourable, which is a perennial source of natural delight, is withered, the senses, which *must* have their satisfaction, in good or in evil, go on for ever craving coarser and more fiery excitements. The imagination, which at first was satisfied with being rid of the shackles of natural law in its enjoyments, soon finds itself used up and dead to vulgar irritants, and betakes itself of necessity to wilful outrage and niceties of profanation of everything that is good and sacred.

It is not too late to check the beginning of these evils among us. It is to be hoped that some means, either by law or by honourable agreement among journalists, may be found to abate the immeasurable mischief of unlimited reports of trials whereby every individual and otherwise insignificant stink-pot is enabled to befoul for days or weeks the whole national atmosphere. And there is evidently no malice-prepense in the class of writers herein especially

referred to, that should prevent them from giving due weight to these considerations and turning their talents to better use.

Let it be remembered that we become what we look upon : therefore, ' whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things ; ' and only regard what is false, foul, unlovely, and infamous as the foils of the truly human life, which is, after all, the most ' sensational '.

HARDY'S NOVELS

[*St. James's Gazette*, April 2, 1887.]

The wealth of this century in prose fiction is scarcely yet appreciated. The number of novels produced from the time of Walter Scott to the present day which are really works of art, and which deserve and will probably obtain a classical position in literature, is surprisingly great ; and the fact is curiously little recognized. To call a book a ' novel ' is to stamp it at once with an ephemeral character in the minds of most readers ; but it will probably be found that, while by far the larger portion of the poetical and historical writing of the present century which is looked upon as ' classical ' will prove to be ephemeral, a large mass of that writing which is regarded as almost by nature transitory will take its place in the ranks of abiding fame with the fiction of Fielding and Goldsmith. No generation has known so well how to

paint itself as our own. Indeed, no generation has ever attempted to paint itself in the same way and with the same fidelity. Hence every past century has drawn a veil over the real life of that which went before, and in some respects human life in the reign of Elizabeth is almost as much a mystery as that of the time of Charlemagne or the Ptolemies. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, indeed, have made themselves comparatively visible to posterity by a number of personal 'memoirs', like those of Mrs. Hutchinson; but, if we go further back than that, there is scarcely any such thing as credible and intelligible delineation of life and manners. How inestimable for times to come such delineations are those best know who have turned from the 'histories' of such periods to those few lifelike glimpses of the times themselves. Now, from Miss Austen to Thomas Hardy, we have had scores of 'fictions' which are only fictions in form; the substance being the very reality of contemporary life, from which posterity will be able to discern as truly what we were as a visitor to a gallery full of Van Dyck's pictures can see how gentlemen and ladies looked in the time of Charles I. The student of 1987, if he wants to know anything really about us, will not find it in our poets or our philosophers or our parliamentary debates, but in our novelists; in many of whose works he will at once recognize the veracity of our portraits, feeling, as we do when we look at a portrait by Velasquez or Titian, that it must be like—nay, that it is—the life itself; and in presence of our 'memoirs' and novels he will feel that the 'catastrophic' period—as, for want of a better name, he may call the unintelligible preceding

ages of society—is over, and that the world has become credible.

During the past very few years, death has made sad havoc among our greatest novelists of the class under consideration. Dickens did not belong to it; for though in some respects he was the greatest of the tribe of story-tellers, it is not to his works that posterity will look for our true likeness. But Thackeray, Trollope, George Eliot, and Mrs. Gaskell have each produced more than one work of indisputable right to a place in this category. Among living writers there are two—one well and one at present comparatively little known—whose work in this kind can scarcely be surpassed; namely, Thomas Hardy and L. B. Walford. Mr. Hardy, though less perfect, is much the greater artist of the two: for, depending for his interest mainly on manners, he confines himself, in his best work, almost exclusively to the manners of the humblest and simplest classes; and in depicting them evokes a tenderness, reality, and force for the like of which we know not where to look in contemporary literature, unless it be in the poems of his friend William Barnes. In Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree*, a gamekeeper and his son, the mistress of the village National school, three or four small tradesmen, and a labourer or two, are the entire *dramatis personae*—with the exception of a young clergyman who is little more than a 'walking gentleman'—and plot there is really none. Yet out of these materials Hardy has made a prose-idyll which deserves to rank with the *Vicar of Wakefield*; though, and partly indeed because, it is as unlike Goldsmith's story as can well be, being absolutely unique in its way. In this and his other

novels Hardy is in every point the reverse of the 'unnatural' school. His love of nature is so passionate and observant, that it is impossible to read him without a sense that he is in some degree wasting his powers and experience by expending them upon prose. No poet has ever discerned more acutely or expressed more forcibly, tenderly, and daintily the inexhaustible beauties of wood, heath, field, and lane; and yet he is so good an artist that nature always keeps its place in his writings as the unobtrusive background of a humanity full of the most breathing life and interest, though, for the most part, as unsophisticated as nature itself. No one, not even the authoress of *Silas Marner*, has ever interpreted rustic manners and passions so faithfully and lovingly: and the borderland between rusticity and the lower grades of 'gentility', which other novelists have made the subject of their most biting sarcasm, is treated by Hardy with a kindliness and sympathetic humour which are all his own. No other novelist, again, has so well understood the value of unity of place. The scene of his drama is scarcely ever shifted; and this constancy to it, and the extraordinary fidelity with which its features are described and kept before us—as in the case of the great heath in the *Return of the Native*, and the old Roman town in the *Mayor of Casterbridge*—give to the whole work a repose and harmony which are, in their kind, incomparable. It is in his heroines, however, that Hardy is most original and delightful. The central female figures of *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Trumpet-Major*, *A Laodicean*, *Two on a Tower*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and *The Wood-*

landers, have never made their appearance in any other story; and yet each has the charm of the simplest and most familiar womanhood, and the only character they have in common is that of having each some serious defect, which only makes us like them more. Hardy is too good an observer not to know that women are like emeralds and rubies, only those of inferior colour and price being without flaw; and he is too rich in human tenderness not to know that love never glows with its fullest ardour unless it has 'something dreadful to forgive'. The most heart-rending pathos is evoked by him, in nearly all his novels, from this source; for there is nothing so tragic as to see the pardonable frailties of amiable characters heavily punished.

Hardy, like all writers who have written so much, has not always written up to himself. *Ethelberta's Hand* was signally below his true mark, and in *The Woodlanders*, his latest novel, he is least happy. Two of the principal characters, Fitzpiers and Mrs. Charmond, are throughout repulsive, and give an ill flavour to the whole book; Grace Melbury, though in the main charming, never takes hold of our sympathy very strongly, and forfeits it altogether when she marries Fitzpiers; and the whole interest of the story is spoilt by our being expected to believe in that incredible event, the abiding repentance and amendment of a flippant profligate. In the secondary characters and their natural surroundings, however, Hardy is all himself. The tragic weight with which he, more than any living writer, knows how to invest the very humblest ranks of rustic life has never been more nobly depicted by him than in the by-plot of

Winterborne and Marty South. The comparative dumbness of the passions and affections of persons in their class becomes, in the hands of Hardy, a deeper source of pathos than the tragic reticence of such feelings in those who are apt of speech.

Why such a master of language should, in his latest work, have repeatedly indulged in such hateful modern slang as 'emotional', and 'phenomenal' (in the sense of 'extraordinary' instead of 'apparent'), and in the equally detestable lingo of the drawing-room 'scientist', seems quite inexplicable.

MRS. WALFORD'S NOVELS

[*The Anti-Jacobin*, September 26, 1891.]

Like Miss Austen, Mrs. Walford délights and succeeds wonderfully in discerning and making her readers discern vivid interests in very common things. She has the true artist's jealousy of what are usually called 'good subjects', and seems happiest when she has lost sight of 'events' altogether, and is free to give to 'manners' that undivided attention which we can all see that they deserve when we find them treated in the rare way they are, by such writers as the authoress of *The Mischief of Monica*.[1] Others have surpassed her in formal and verbal finish; her great merit is the more essential one of apparent unconsciousness.

Of course, this unconsciousness is only apparent; for consciousness is the soul of art. Its seemingly absolute non-existence is only the perfection of the

[1] *The Mischief of Monica*. By L. B. Walford. Three vols. 1891.

ars celare artem. In this one point Mrs. Walford excels all recent delineators of manners. The authors of *Vanity Fair* and *Barchester Towers* have other excellences to which Mrs. Walford cannot pretend. But we can always see that Thackeray and Trollope know exactly what they are doing, and the value of it; whereas Mrs. Walford, in what seems to careless eyes like the reckless *insouciance* of a schoolgirl's talk, is painting with the ease, care, and infallibility of a feminine Titian. Her delight, indeed, in the exercise of this power—a delight in which every-one who knows anything practically of artistic production must sympathize with her—has led her into a serious neglect of other not unimportant matters; and this neglect has been growing upon her, and is most strikingly manifested in her last novel, *The Mischief of Monica.* In this story she treats natural probabilities with the contempt with which Raphael, with greater artistic excuses, treated the mere facts of nature when he put several big men, some standing up, into a boat which would be sunk by two or three children. Her hero and her two charming heroines happen to be persons who, by misfortune of their birth and bringing up, find themselves in the class to which life seems not quite worth living, without a long line of ancestors, and, say, fifteen thousand a year. Mrs. Walford's object is to depict the behaviour of certain persons of this order under temporary privation of the necessary fifteen thousand a year, and in compulsory association with beings who have no ancestors to speak of, and whose 'common style' is not

> Virtue at her gracious ease,
> The flower of olden sanctities.

Her purpose is exquisitely carried out in all that relates to manners; but when it becomes necessary, for the final fruition of the desires of the three young aristocrats, Mr. Dorrien and the Misses Lavenham, that they should emerge from the clouds of poverty and commercial society, this end is attained by the merciless cutting-off, by railway accident, suicide, and galloping decline, of three others, by whose sudden removal the three 'flowers' can alone be enabled to enjoy the conditions of blossoming to perfection. An objection very likely to be made to Mrs. Walford's novels in these days, when we seem to have made up our minds that bread for all is better than ambrosia for some, is that the writer's preference for ambrosia and the flower of olden sanctities is very decidedly marked. *The Times* once observed that 'it takes at least three thousand acres to grow a gentleman'; and Mrs. Walford, without troubling herself about political economies and social problems, simply and audaciously shows her delight in this expensive agricultural product. 'Mr. Smith', indeed, and his surroundings move in a less elevated sphere; but in all the succeeding novels, as far as we remember, our sympathies are demanded for the aristocratic. But there is never the faintest flavour of snobbishness in this. *The Baby's Grandmother* especially represents 'the flower of olden sanctities' with so light, pure, and sweet a touch that it is impossible not to regret that the blossom ordinarily requires so much land and such a long course of cultivation. With a touch superior, in this respect, to Trollope's, Mrs. Walford also excels him in the sarcasm of her representation of the noxious weeds which are the product of the

same external conditions that produce the flowers. Sir Arthur and Lady Dorrien, in the novel before us, are morally more effective than most other novelists' aristocratic tyrants and fools because they are represented as simple and altogether credible facts, and without any apparent intention of sarcasm. Nor can we charge Mrs. Walford with any injustice or undue bias. Daisy Schoefield, for example, in *The Mischief of Monica*, is as charming as a girl can be who has been born and brought up with mercantile surroundings and traditions; and the Sylvia and Hester of Mrs. Gaskell are scarcely drawn with a more loving and learned hand.

A BOOK OF HUNTING SONGS

[*St. James's Gazette*, April 6, 1886.]

Mr. Egerton-Warburton's *Hunting Songs* have reached a seventh edition, and deserve to have attained this honour; yet probably most of our readers have never heard of them. At a meeting of the committee of the Literary Fund, Bishop Wilberforce, on examining a volume of 'Poems' which had been placed before the committee in support of some claimant for aid, is said to have objected, 'Are "poems" literature?' And, at the same meeting, a book of sermons having been similarly put in testimony, Lord Houghton asked, 'Are sermons literature?' There is, indeed, a sense in which poems and sermons may not be, strictly speaking, 'literature', and yet be exceedingly good in their kind. For example, the claim of Dibdin's sea-songs to be called literature, in

the sense which would give their writer a title to be called a man of letters, might reasonably be questioned, without at all questioning the fact that those songs are a great deal more valuable and meritorious than much verse that might be conventionally styled literature. Literature proper implies a certain amount of art and consciousness. It is scarcely enough that its modes of expression should be simply good; they should have a certain additional reflected goodness, such as is given to the manners of a graceful woman by a graceful knowledge of herself. The songs, however, of Dibdin and Mr. Egerton-Warburton were written expressly for seamen and hunters, and not for amateurs and the drawing-room; and without being, and partly because they are not, literature in the sense above described, they are each in their kind about the best things that have been done. Mr. Egerton-Warburton's success in this kind of writing is the more remarkable because he is a literary man and a scholar; as he has proved in a small volume of luxuriously printed and beautifully illustrated sonnets, several of which, though they seem to have been ignored by our recent sonnet-selectors, are of high excellence. For instance:

ON THE MARIEN CAPELLE, CARLSBAD

One silver star with evening's twilight strove;
Mid the dark pines, which base and summit hide,
A lone lamp glimmer'd on the mountain side,
As 'twere a star reflected from above;
The Chapel of the Virgin! Cold in love,
And proud of heart, forbear ye to deride;
Judge not his conscience, nor a brother chide,
Though to yourselves a stumbling-block it prove.

On this pure spot, its shrine with offerings hung,
Its rock by knees of suppliant pilgrims worn,
Intruding—dare I prayerless hence depart?
'Hail! Virgin-Mother, highly blest!' My tongue
Repeats the salutation, while my heart
Bows down in worship to the Virgin-born.

Mr. Egerton-Warburton, though no mean scholar and poet, is first a country squire and fox-hunter. When he has donned his scarlet coat and got his feet in the stirrups, there is none of the mixture of real feebleness and assumed impetuosity of the muscular Christian of the Charles Kingsley type: he does not invoke the east wind as the 'wind of God', nor take leaps which none but an infatuated tailor would venture. He forgets even that he is a poet, and only vents his hunting songs in numbers because the numbers come. His high literary training only appears in his never being at a loss for the best words, the best rhymes, and the best metres, for his purpose; and his natural 'go' is so great, that it is after and not while we are reading his verses that we note his mastery over language. Once, and only once, in the course of these songs the scholar betrays himself in a strain of Sapphics which must have sorely puzzled by its metre many of his most admiring readers.

The Earth Stopper

Terror of henroosts! now from hollow sand-earth,
Safely at nightfall, round the quiet farmstead,
Reynard on tiptoe, meditating plunder,
Warily prowleth.

Rouse thee, earth stopper! rouse thee from thy slumber!
Get thee thy worsted hose and winter coat on;
While the good housewife, crawling from her blanket,
Lights thee thy lantern.

Clad for thy midnight silent occupation,
Mount thy old dog-horse, spade upon thy shoulder,
Wiry-hair'd Vixen, wheresoe'er thou wendest,
Ready to follow.

Though the chill rain-drops, driven by the north wind,
Pelt thy old jacket, soaking through and through thee,
Though thy worn hackney, blind and broken-winded,
Hobble on three legs;

Finish thy night-work well, or woe betide thee,
If on the morrow irritated Huntsman,
Back'd by a hundred followers in scarlet,
Find the earths open.

Mr. Egerton-Warburton appears to have been a distinguished member of the Tarporley Hunt; and most of the pieces in this volume have the advantage of a decided local colouring—which involves, however, the drawback of some allusions that do not explain themselves to the general reader. Some pieces are in the Doric of the district. The best of these, 'Farmer Dobbin', is too long for quotation, and would be spoiled by abbreviation. Let those of our readers who may be tempted to look it up note that it was written many years before Lord Tennyson's 'Northern Farmer'.

ROBERT BRIDGES

[*St. James's Gazette*, March 9, 1885; December 31, 1885.]

I. 'PROMETHEUS THE FIREGIVER'

'The crowd, incapable of perfectness', is not likely ever to be much attracted by such verses as those of Mr. Robert Bridges, of which the chief merit is a quiet

unpretentious perfectness, which has the air of coming not from laboured finish, but from finished habits of thought, feeling, and life, combined with and aided by a scholar's attainments. Though differing from Mr. William Barnes in almost every other quality, Mr. Bridges resembles the Dorsetshire poet more than any other modern writer in this character of perfectness which bears little or no sign of work: a character the opposite to that of the best poems of Tennyson, in which the manifestation of finish and fully accomplished labour constitutes of itself no small grace. Another probable obstacle in the way of Mr. Bridges's acceptance by the public is his singular though entirely unostentatious independence of any other poet or school. He seems to have read and felt with fullness, but with such impartiality that people will never begin by admiring his verses because they are like those of some one else whom they may happen to admire; nor is the absence of this great and almost universal first cause of popular favour balanced by anything that most readers would think 'striking' or 'original'. We feel quite sure that Mr. Bridges would be absolutely distressed if any reader whom he respected should be detained by any line or passage of his to say or think 'That 's fine!' He aims at and attains a style so equable, and the eminently beautiful lines or passages are so proportioned to and arise so naturally out of eminent occasions, that nothing is 'striking' until it is made to stand alone, and then most of the beauty vanishes because it is relative. In what he writes Mr. Bridges is thoroughly 'masterly', because he knows exactly the powers he is master of, and never attempts to strain them. In this, too, he

resembles Mr. Barnes, who never fancies that, because he is a writer of matchless idylls and eclogues, he ought to try his hand at epics or odes. No extracts could give any idea of that equable and steady poetic flight, of which the main charm consists, not in its altitude, but its sweet and unlaboured evenness. There is no passage fit for isolation to compare with the sixteen or twenty lines in praise of Athens in Mr. Swinburne's 'Erechtheus', or with two or three of the love-passages in 'Maud'; but we question whether posterity—if there should be any posterity capable of classic art—will not finally judge 'Prometheus the Firegiver' to be the most valuable work of the three. So much for Mr. Bridges's workmanship. The next most noteworthy character of his poetry, as far as we are acquainted with it, from 'Prometheus' and other less commonly accessible specimens, is the way in which he treats those unfathomable founts of meaning, the great Greek myths. He never tries to discover in them parables in aid of 'modern virtues brummagem', as some one has called them, much less idle allegories of the seasons, etc., like those which cunning persons have discovered in such gulfs of psychological significance as the story of Persephone, concerning which Aeschylus has declared that he to whom its sense is revealed need not fear Hades. Mr. Bridges gives his story as he finds it, surrounding it indeed at times with suitable, but most carefully subordinated, accessories; so that the original myth stands clear, like a statue surrounded by a garden. But the statue is not cold. It glows with the poet's synthetic perception. Its multiple meanings unveil themselves in proportion to the deserts and capacity of the beholder. In the

gift of fire by Prometheus, those who have eyes to see with Mr. Bridges may discover fire within fire—from that which consumes the heap of sticks upon the altar, through the fires of the senses, the affections, and the will, up to the last ardour of intellectual light. Prometheus speaks :

> O heavenly fire, life's life, the eye of day,
> Whose nimble voice amid the starry night
> Of music-making ether loves to play,
> Whispering commands to every gliding sprite
> To feed all things with colour, from the ray
> Of thy bright-glancing, white
> And silver-spinning light ;
> Unweaving its thin tissue for the bow
> Of Iris, separating countless hues
> Of various splendour for the grateful flowers
> To crown the hasting hours,
> Changing their special garlands as they choose.
> O spirit of rage and might,
> Who canst unchain the links of water stark,
> And bid earth's stubborn metals flow like oil,
> Her porphyrous heart-veins boil ;
> Whose arrows pierce the cloudy shields of dark ;
> Let now this flame . . .
> Here with my breath revive,
> Restore thy lapsèd realm, and be the sire
> Of many an earthly fire.

Further on, after an admirable description of the physical phenomena of the newly-lighted fire, the semi-chorus :

> My heart, my heart is freed.
> Now can I sing. I loose a shaft from my bow,
> A song from my heart to heaven, and watch it speed ;
> It revels in the air, and straight to its goal doth go.
> I have no fear, I praise distinguishing duly :

I praise the love that I love, and I worship truly.
Goodness I praise, not might,
Nor more will I speak of wrong,
But of loving-kindness and right,
And the god of my love shall rejoice at the sound of my song.
I praise him whom I have seen.
As a man he is beautiful, blending prime and youth,
Of gentle and lovely mien,
With the step and the eyes of truth,
As a god—O were I a god, but thus to be man!
. . . . . .
He is the one I adore.
For if there be love in heaven with evil to cope—
And he promised us more and more—
For what, what may we not hope?

The baptism by the fire of love and the supersession thereby of the intolerable reign of might and a loveless law is, of course, the core of the poem. We say the core in preference to the meaning, because the word meaning implies a set purpose, of which there is no appearance whatever. The poem, like nature, is full of symbolism and innocent of conscious intention.

Without implying any comparison of the merits of this work with those of *Samson Agonistes*, it may, we think, be safely said that no other English drama upon the Greek type approaches more nearly to that type than 'Prometheus the Firegiver'.

II. 'EROS AND PSYCHE'

The charming story of Apuleius has been 'done into English' several times. An anonymous writer (said to be Hudson Gurney), Mrs. Tighe, Mr. Pater, and Mr. William Morris have all achieved very considerable successes; but it has been reserved for Mr. Bridges to

make what will probably be the standard transcript. Like his three predecessors, Mr. Bridges takes the story as it stands, without attempting, with St. Augustine and Bishop Warburton, to exalt the author of the *Golden Ass* into a Doctor of the Church or a rival of Balaam's inspired but ill-used animal. That this exquisite poetical novelette is in the main a parable is obvious; but none of the tasks imposed by Venus upon her poor little rival and victim were more seemingly hopeless than is that of explaining this parable fully, though the light of its obscure significance flashes from almost every sentence. It seems to us very doubtful whether Apuleius himself had always a perfectly clear intelligence of what he was about. He seems to have taken the fable as it stood in its older and simpler forms, and to have decked and obscured it with ideas of his own. Notwithstanding this and other deductions from its literary merits that might be alleged, this story must be reckoned among the best of books by those who adopt the lively but sound saying that 'a good book is a book which does one good'. It is impossible for any but a very dull person to remain a merely passive recipient of the ideas and images of this tale. It excites the reader to a sort of active co-operation with the writer. We seem constantly to be on the point of discerning some happy secret of the soul, and are constantly but only partially disappointed. 'I know not how it is,' writes St. Bernard, 'but the more the realities of heaven are clothed with obscurity the more they delight and attract, and nothing so much heightens longing as such tender refusal.'

In this poem Mr. Bridges has fully sustained his

claim to the praise with which we welcomed 'Prometheus the Firegiver'. The writing is equal, vigorous, and perspicuous from beginning to end. It is as easy to read as a novel; the versification being neither weak nor overfraught with that elaborate rhythmical significance which sometimes causes the reader to pause, even in first-rate poetry, to consider whether he has scanned the verses aright. Mr. Bridges knows exactly what he can do, and does it with gaiety, decision, and an air at once masterful and modest. His descriptive touches are abundant and abundantly beautiful; and they are executed with so light a hand, and are so free from false emphasis, that the writer seems quite unconscious of what he has done. Any poet might be proud to have said that

> The night was crowding up the barren fells;

or to have described the persons in a single-file procession down a mountain-pass as

> Each leading on the way that he was led;

or to have painted the rising sun as

> Sifting his gold thro' lazy mists, that still
> Climbed on the shadowy roots of every hill,
> And in the tree-tops breathed their silvery haze.

But Mr. Bridges is so full of his main purpose that he never pauses to praise himself for the sparks which his Pegasus strikes out with his hoofs on the way; and the consequence will be that many of his readers will notice them as little as he does. It is true that when he deals with human feeling Mr. Bridges is not intense. Who, but some half-dozen of the very greatest poets, ever has been? But he is never *tense*, which is the vulgar

counterfeit offered in place of the intense by many a modern poet and some old ones, and which is accepted by most readers as being a great deal better than the true thing; though the tense and intense in poetry are about as like each other as Marsyas's flute and Apollo's lyre, or the bat's attenuated shriek and the calm pathos of the thrush. In everything infinite, even in infinite sorrow, there is peace; and the true master of the intense in art is never so much disturbed by his subject as not to be able to express it with sincerity and grace, and to 'temper extremities with extreme sweet'. Compare the quiet, gracious, Titian-like touch of such a sentence as this—

> Of many thousand kisses, the poor last
> Upon thy lips I lay—

with the way such a thing would be said by the tense school of poetry, so much in favour of late, and the difference between the tense and the intense will appear. The tense is an extravagant and unreal mockery of the intense, as hysterics are of true passion.

Aristotle says exquisitely that the character of the language of poetry is 'a continual slight novelty'. How many poets, even of considerable pretensions, aim at continual novelty, forgetting the slightness which is the grace and guarantee of artistic veracity. In almost all times there have been poets who, aiming at effects beyond their strength, have been rather startling than moving. The 'spasmodic school' is commonly supposed to have been a development of our own age; but there never has been any such 'school', and the semblance of such a monstrous thing in our own day is simply owing to the fact that there have been more

poets in our day than in any other who have not comprehended their own limitations and kept to the line on which they were fitted to excel. There has been a partial revulsion from this sort of thing in favour of a dull and merely imitative classicism of subject and manner, and even in favour of a style and kind of 'motif' essentially and avowedly evanescent. The two or three poets who have succeeded in writing really good *vers de société* have proved themselves fit for better things. Mr. Bridges writes neither above nor below himself.

THOMAS WOOLNER'S 'TIRESIAS'

[*St. James's Gazette*, April 17, 1886.]

For some seventeen centuries the mysteries of Eleusis were the heart of the world's civilization, as those of Christianity have been for a like period since. To the knowledge of those mysteries, as to those of Christianity in its earlier times, only the pure were admitted; the outside world being allowed, however, to share the sacred light transmitted through the clouds of myths and sacraments. The lesser mysteries were veiled in parables—that is to say, in stories having one meaning within another; the greater in enigmas in which the external lends no aid to the internal, being altogether devoid of rational meaning, and being useful, not to hint by analogy, but to corroborate by the secret communion of intelligences already wise. The story of Tiresias, blinded to the world's light by divine vision. and the historic parable—quoted as such by St. Paul—of Hagar and Ishmael, are examples in the one kind. Tiresias's striking at intervals of seven

years and on the mountain-top, the two interwoven snakes; his change of sex in consequence; his bearing Daphne, the beloved of Apollo, during the period of his womanhood; the golden rod by which he is guided, &c., is a notable instance of the other: as is the no less surprising fable of the Bull upon Mount Gorgano, in the Roman Breviary for the 'Apparition of St. Michael'.

Mr. Woolner has wisely abstained from touching on the enigmatic element in the wonderful myth of Tiresias, and has limited himself to the parabolic: the blinding of his natural and the opening of his supernatural sight by a glimpse of absolute wisdom, his acquisition thereby of the faculty of prophecy and that of understanding the voices of Nature.

By his poems *Pygmalion*, *Silenus*, and *Tiresias*, Mr. Woolner has placed himself distinctly at the head of that considerable and accomplished set of cotemporary poets who have devoted themselves mainly to the revival of ancient mythology and its interpretation in verse. If he is excelled by Mr. Bridges in the easy mastery of language, and by the author of the *Epic of Hades* or of *The Light of Asia*, in their very Tennysonian mode of finish, he more than makes up by a poetic individuality of his own. One might have some doubt as to the source of an anonymous passage by Mr. Bridges and might very easily attribute a nameless poem by Mr. Lewis Morris or Mr. Edwin Arnold to somebody else; but no one, having read *Pygmalion* or *Silenus*, could open *Tiresias* at random and not detect Mr. Woolner; and that not through any peculiar mannerism, but by a touch of real style—that rarest of all artistic merits, and which consists, not in a singular way of saying but of seeing things. There is scarcely

a page in *Tiresias* in which there is not some little affectionate touch of natural description, which differs as much from the touch of any of his brother-poets as the smile of one person differs from that of another.

The opening passage of the poem, in which Tiresias comes upon Pallas as she is bathing, is the most evenly wrought piece of work in the volume, and perhaps excels everything that Mr. Woolner has written since the first draft of 'My Beautiful Lady' as it appeared some thirty-five years ago in the *Germ*, and on which we do not think he has improved.[1]

Tiresias is, what very good poetry often is not, very readable throughout. Like *Pygmalion* and *Silenus*, it is well composed in large masses of artistically contrasted light and shadow; there is often much intensity in the imagery, but seldom any sense of strain; and in the lyric portions of the poem, which occupy something like two-thirds of the entire work, there is a great deal of easy grace and movement and a display of considerable skill in the invention of new forms of stanza. Mr. Woolner has followed the example of many poets of classical eminence in making abundant allusion to present political and social events and interests. The lava-like streams of indignation which occasionally relieved the idyllic repose of his preceding poems, break forth again in *Tiresias*; and, indeed, although the fire is well covered in in most parts of these poems, we get somehow the impression that it is to indignation, that great maker of verses, that we are indebted for the renewed appearance of Mr. Woolner among the poets.

[1] An illustrative quotation of fifty lines is omitted here, for which the reader is referred to the original poem.—Ed.

AUBREY DE VERE'S POEMS

[*St. James's Gazette*, July 16, 1887.]

Mr. Aubrey de Vere's poems, the chief fruit of some fifty years of conscientious labour, are comprised in seven goodly octavos. In everything he has written his aim has been grave and high, and the execution invariably respectable, and often a good deal more than respectable. If he has seldom sustained his poetic flight at the altitude often reached by his great model, Wordsworth, he has written nothing of which even Wordsworth need have been ashamed; and if he has not found his actual popularity correspond altogether to the ardent recognition accorded him in some very high quarters, it is, no doubt, in part, from the same reason which has prevented the Ecclesiastical Sonnets of Wordsworth, and the 'Dream of Gerontius' of Newman, from touching the popular taste: namely, the very flavour of ecclesiasticism which to their authors and a chosen circle has been their chief attraction. Many of Mr. Aubrey de Vere's poems—especially his early poems—are, indeed, fairly secular; but there has always been a sufficient predominance of religious purpose to stamp the character of his work on the whole, and he has not dealt with religion in either of the only two ways in which it is widely acceptable. He has not been sectarian, even when Catholic; and he has not sacrificed a dogmatic faith to the vague and feeble sentimentality which passes now with millions for religion.

Mr. Aubrey de Vere's mind is probably so constituted that not to have been expressly and avowedly religious

in his writing would have been impossible ; and religion with him must not only have meant attachment to a ' visible ' Church, but the necessity for displaying that attachment. Now, it is an express doctrine of Mr. de Vere's Church that ' love supersedes all the sacraments ' ; and it certainly appears to us that the religion of the poet is most poetical when most hidden in the secret of that love, and when it avoids all forms of an ecclesiastical, however orthodox, manifestation. The poet is a prophet, not a priest, and the two offices have, from the earliest times, been wholly independent, even when they have not been antagonistic. The prophet has ever been to the truly universal Church, which includes all such as love the living truth with an ardour which ' supersedes all the sacraments ' what the priest has been to the ' visible ' body ; and it grates a little upon our sense of congruity when he who is, by profession at least, an original ' seer ' has the least semblance of a habit of looking at realities with any eyes but his own.

But to attempt to treat religion in verse from the ' seer's ' point of view is to attempt a very great thing indeed—a thing so rarely attained that all the good religious poetry extant, including the expressly religious portions of Dante, which only form a small part of his great poem, and excluding the Bible, would, if collected, scarcely form a book as large as the volume which is now under notice[1]. Thoughts and feelings may be too high as well as too low to ' move harmonious numbers '. The inner life of the saint, which is well called the ' hidden life ', has no adequate expression.

[1] *Legends and Records of the Church and Empire.* By Aubrey de Vere. 1887

The most delicate and glowing poetic imagery in the hands of the most inspired and accomplished poet scarcely suffices to shadow forth the affections of ordinary humanity; and it seems to us that we get the best insight into the life which claims to be far higher than that, from the, for the most part, hard and stuttering prose of saintly writers. These seem to be serious arguments against expressly religious poetry generally — not against 'hymns', which, as we all know, scarcely ever attempt to be poetry, but which have their necessary use in public devotion. But there is a very real sense in which poetry may be, and ought to be, 'religious'; it should, and most of the best poetry in the world does, represent the fruits of religion in beautifully ordered life, and nature as seen by the eye which is interiorly illuminated by spirit.

> By grace divine,
> Not otherwise, O Nature, are we thine,

sings the special poet of nature, Wordsworth; but there are few serious poets who have been more careful than Wordsworth has been, when he has been most himself, to keep 'religion' as such at arm's length. The greatest religious poets have, in all ages, expressed themselves in purposely obscured and often playful myths and parables, of which the merely external sense has sufficient beauty to charm and satisfy the common reader, and to lure him away from their true significance, which is for other ears.

There are many of Mr. de Vere's minor poems, besides the drama of 'Alexander the Great' and the paraphrase of the Irish epic, the 'Tain bo Cuailgné', to which the foregoing remarks do not apply. In these —as, indeed, in all his poems—Mr. de Vere writes at

a high and steadily maintained level, from which he often rises into sayings and images which would do credit to any poet. He is always manly as well as graceful, and his grace is never imitative. It is something quite unlike the Tennysonian echo which is given back from the lyres of most of the accomplished verse-writers of the day. As a dramatist, in 'St. Thomas of Canterbury' and 'Alexander the Great', he has no reason to fear comparison with Lord Tennyson himself; though in lyric and idyllic poetry he is left far behind by the superior concentration and finish of the Poet Laureate.

FRANCIS THOMPSON, A NEW POET

[*Fortnightly Review*, January 1894.]

Mr. Francis Thompson is a writer whom it is impossible that any qualified judge should deny to be a 'new poet'; one altogether distinct in character from that of the several high-class mediocrities who, during the past twenty years or so, have blazed into immense circulation, and have deceived, for a while, many who have seemed to be of the elect among critics. And, unlike most poets of his quality, who have usually had to wait a quarter of a century or more for adequate recognition, this poet is pretty sure of a wide and immediate acknowledgement. A singular and very interesting history will convince thousands whom the rumour of it may reach, that he is an 'extraordinary person'; the heroic faith in and devotion to the interests of his genius which, through long years, has been shown by at least two friends, one of

them a lady not inferior in genius to his own; his recognition of her helpfulness by a series of poems which St. John of the Cross might have addressed to St. Theresa, and which, had she not established by her own writings a firm and original hold on fame, would have carried her name to posterity in company with that of Mrs. Ann Killigrew; the very defects of his writing, which will render manifest, by contrast, its beauties, thereby ingratiating 'the crowd, incapable of perfectness'; his abundant and often unnecessary obscurities, which will help his popularity, as Browning's did his, by ministering to the vanity of such as profess to be able to see through millstones, are all circumstances which will probably do more for his immediate acceptance by the literary public than qualities which ought to place him, even should he do no more than he has done, in the permanent ranks of fame, with Cowley and with Crashaw.

Considering that these eighty-one pages of verse are all that Mr. Thompson has done, there would seem room for almost any hope of what he may do, but for one circumstance which seems to limit expectancy. He is, I believe, about thirty-five years old—an age at which most poets have written as well as they have ever written, and at which the faculty of 'taste', which is to a poet what chastity is to a woman, is usually as perfect as it is likely ever to be. It was Cowley's incorrigible defect of taste, rather than any fault of the time, that was responsible for the cold conglomerate of grit which constitutes the mass of his writing, though he was occasionally capable of ardent flights of pure and fluent verse; and it is by the same shortcoming in Crashaw that we are continually

reminded that what he would have us accept for concrete poetic passion is mainly an *intellectual* ardour. The phraseology of a perfectly poetic ardour is always ' simple, sensuous, and passionate ', and has a seemingly unconscious *finish from within*, which no ' polish ' can produce. Mr. Thompson, as some critic has remarked, is a ' greater Crashaw '. He has never, in the present book of verses, done anything which approaches, in technical beauty, to Crashaw's ' Music's Duel ' ; but then Crashaw himself never did anything else approaching it ; and, for the rest of his work, it has all been equalled, if not excelled, in its peculiar beauties as well as its peculiar defects, by this new poet. Yet there is nothing in his little book which can rightly be charged with plagiarism. The ideas, and to a certain extent the language and style, of true poets become the common property of the guild, and all that is demanded of them is, that they should improve or vary what they take from each other, so as, in some sort, to make it their own. The greatest poets, and, indeed, the greatest artists of all sorts, have been the greatest plagiarists. None knows how much Milton ' stole ' but the man whose studies have been coextensive with ancient and modern literature, and every one who has spent a few months among the galleries and churches of Italy must have discovered that there is scarcely anything in Raphael's work which is *all* his own.

The masculine intellect, which is the first constituent of all poetry having any pretentions to ' greatness ', and which has been so lamentably wanting in most of the poetry of the past generation, is as conspicuous and, alas, as predominant in Mr. Thompson's poetry as it is in that of Crashaw and Cowley. The feminine

element, which is as essential to perfect poetry as a crust is to a pie, is in insuffic ent presence. Profound thought, and far-fetched splendour of imagery, and nimble-witted discernment of those analogies which are the ' roots ' of the poet's language, abound ; but in the feminine faculties of ' taste ', of emotion that must have music for its rendering, of shy moderation which never says quite so much as it means, of quickness to ' scent the ridiculous from afar ', of the dainty conscience which sets ' decorum ' far above all other duties and knows that in poetry the manner is much more important than the matter, since manner is beautiful in itself, whereas, without it, it is no matter what the matter may be since it fails to express itself with feminine *feeling* and perfection ; in these qualities Mr. Thompson s poetry is as often deficient as is that of his two eminent predecessors. Even the barest sublimity cannot be adequately rendered in poetry without some measure of the chaste and timid reticence of womanhood. Mr. Thompson throws about him ' handfuls of stars ', and swings the earth as ' a trinket from his wrist ' ; but these are very cheap sublimities compared with Aeschylus's

> Slow is the wrath of gods, but, in the end, *not weak*.

It is wonderful that, with such a truly splendid command of language as is possessed by this poet, he should have thought it expedient to search the dictionary for words many of which are not only archaic, but really extinct and incapable of resurrection. It is no excuse for the use for such a word as ' cockshut-light ' that it has been once or twice used by Marlowe, or somebody, for ' twilight ', and there is still less excuse

for Mr. Thompson's abundant invention of entirely new words, which have not even the plea of being beautiful, but only that of being etymologically intelligible to those who know Latin. Only the very greatest poets have ever, so far as I recollect, succeeded in adding more than two or three new words to the language of English poetry; but Mr. Thompson's muse hatches them by the dozen, with the effect, in each case, of producing a shock of interruption, which spoils what might otherwise have been a delicate flow of thought and rhythm. One critic of note has condemned these inventions as 'illiterate'; but this is quite unjust. Mr. Thompson is a good Latin and Greek scholar, and his linguistic freaks are only too 'literate'.

I feel a personal and sort of proprietary interest in the metrical qualities of much of Mr. Thompson's verse. Between the years 1867 and 1877 I was mainly engaged in endeavouring to draw attention to the capacities of the iambic tetrameter with unlimited catalexis, which is commonly called the 'irregular' ode, though it is really as 'regular' as any other English metre, and even much more so, if its subtle laws are truly considered and obeyed. Cowley succeeded, in his 'Pindarique' odes, in covering this metre with ridicule, from which the exceedingly few successful attempts of his successors to write in it have scarcely redeemed it. Even when their 'motif' has been suitable and their language has possessed something of the purity and sweet austerity which this form of verse requires, the full meaning of its great range of pause—from that of the long-drawn sigh of two syllables to the passionate cataract of sixteen, in

which pause altogether disappears—has not been understood by them, and in their ' irregular ' odes, the pause has been almost always more or less accidental and motiveless, and has given its sentiment to the poetry instead of being the outcome of the sentiment. Another cause of failure has been the lack of the strong though severe initiative of passion the wind of which is sufficient to raise in this metre the appropriate billows of harmony, each growing out of the other with manifest inevitableness, from the beginning to the end. This metre affords incomparable facilities for the expression of a strong feeling, but it is not only difficult, but impossible to write worthily in it without such feeling. The metre must be the creation of passionate inspiration. All other metres have fixed laws, and one knows what to expect from them; but varied law implies varied motive, and, unless the motive be manifest, the metre becomes *nonsense*.

Owing, again, to the peculiarly and essentially *fluent* character of this metre, it can hardly be used with full success by any poet who has not acquired, by long practice in simpler rhythms, that *sense* of metre which is rare even in very good poets, and that technical perfection of language by which alone he can avoid those defects, extravagances, or shortcomings of expression, every one of which is a disastrous check to the all-important and self-explanatory flow of the great and delicate rhythm. During the last fifteen years or so this measure, after its long disuse, has been attempted by almost every writer in verse; but nearly all have failed, as nearly all must fail who should endeavour to execute a sonata of Beethoven before they have learned to play the scales. Of all these modern experimenta-

lists, Mr. Thompson is, to my thinking, the only one who has, in some large measure, succeeded, notwithstanding his want of practice and his occasional defects and redundancies of language. The 'Hound of Heaven' has so great and passionate and such a metre-creating motive, that we are carried over all obstructions of the rhythmical current, and are compelled to pronounce it, at the end, one of the very few 'great' odes of which the language can boast. In a lesser degree this metre-making passion prevails in the seven remarkable pieces called 'Love in Dian's Lap', poems which Laura might have been proud and Lucretia not ashamed to have had addressed to her.

The main region of Mr. Thompson's poetry is the inexhaustible and hitherto almost unworked mine of Catholic philosophy. Not but that he knows better than to make his religion the direct subject of any of his poems, unless it presents itself to him as a human passion, and the most human of passions, as it does in the splendid ode just noticed, in which God's long pursuit and final conquest of the resisting soul is described in a torrent of as humanly impressive verse as was ever inspired by a natural affection. Mr. Thompson places himself, by these poems, in the front rank of the pioneers of the movement which, if it be not checked, as in the history of the world it has once or twice been checked before, by premature formulation and by popular and profane perversion, must end in creating a 'new heaven and a new earth'. The spirit which is working this movement is not confined to the Catholic Church; indeed, its working is less obvious there than it is in other less reticent communions. But nowhere is this movement going on at so rapid and

even revolutionary a rate as it is in tongueless monasteries and in the hearts of many in the world who are wisely silent when it is not their singular and assured vocation to speak. Poetry of the very highest and most austere order is almost the only form in which the corollaries of the doctrine of the Incarnation, to which the deepest minds are now awaking, can be safely approached. Prose and the parish pulpit must yet, for a long while, persevere in

> Smiting the brutish ear with doctrine hard,
> Wherein Truth strives to look as near a lie
> As can comport with her divinity ;

but the poet may speak with comparative boldness, because, as I have said elsewhere, there is little danger of his being believed or listened to, except by those who already know, as they only can know who have learned that nature (*natura*) is only 'about to be', until, through grace, it comes to its glorious actuality.

> By Grace divine,
> Not otherwise, O Nature, are we thine,

is the doctrine, not only of Wordsworth and great poets and theologians, but it is known to be the truth by all who can read them and believe that they are never so near the fundamental realities of life as when, to the vulgar and unclean, they appear to be remote from them. Of the glorification and supernatural invigoration of all the human passions by control and continence the many know nothing. They go on burning the powder of human force in dishes, instead of in gun-barrels, and, in their estimates of life, they mistake wasteful blaze for effectual energy.

Mr. Thompson's poetry is 'spiritual' almost to

a fault. He is always, even in love, upon mountain heights of perception, where it is difficult for even disciplined mortality to breathe for long together. The Lady whom he delights to honour he would have to be too seraphic even for a seraph. He rebukes her for wearing diamonds, as if she would be a true woman if she did not delight in diamonds, if she could get them; and as if she could be truly seraphic were she not a woman. The crown of stars of the *Regina Coeli* is not more naturally gratifying and becoming to her who, as St. Augustine says, had no sin, 'except, perhaps, a little vanity', than the tiara of brilliants is to the *Regina Mundi*. Mr. Thompson is a Titan among recent poets; but he should not forget that a Titan may require and obtain renovation of his strength by occasional acquaintance with the earth, without which the heavens themselves are weak and unstable. The tree Igdrasil, which has its head in heaven and its roots in hell (the 'lower parts of the earth'), is the image of the true man, and eminently so of the poet, who is eminently man. In proportion to the bright and divine heights to which it ascends must be the obscure depths in which the tree is rooted, and from which it draws the mystic sap of its spiritual life.

Since, however, Mr. Thompson's spirituality is a real ardour of life, and not the mere negation of life, which passes, with most people, for spirituality, it seems somewhat ungracious to complain of its predominance. It is the greatest and noblest of defects, and shines rather as an eminent virtue in a time when most other Igdrasils are hiding their heads in hell and affronting heaven with their indecorous roots.

It is a sure sign, for those who want a sign, of the essential soundness of Mr. Thompson's highest spiritual and poetical flights that he can write prose replete with the great and universally acceptable common-sense of genius. Nearly all true poets have written prose admirably, and with eminent and manly insight into matters well within an ordinarily cultivated comprehension; but I have seldom read prose more simple in style and more weighted with great good sense than has appeared, from time to time, with Mr. Thompson's name, in two or three little-known periodicals.

MRS. MEYNELL'S NEW ESSAYS

[*Saturday Review*, June 13, 1896.]

Since the publication of Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, two hundred and fifty years ago, probably no literary work of *equal quality* has ever met with recognition so sudden and complete as that which has been accorded to the Essays of Mrs. Meynell. No journal of character failed to greet the appearance of her first wonderful little book with words of admiration which would have been enthusiastic had it not been felt by the critics that there would have been something indecorous in the expression of enthusiasm in the presence of the exquisite reticence and moderation of the work praised. It is a singular testimony to the incomparable grace, dignity, and truth of Mrs. Meynell's writing that the tone of all her critics seems to have been elevated by and made more or less like hers. Her literary manners are so supremely and manifestly lovely that they seem to have imposed the same sort

of moral compulsion upon her literary inferiors to become as much like her as they could, as is imposed upon an ordinary company by the personal presence of the like extraordinary excellence of character and culture. Exceeding beauty, with its pathos of unapproachableness, checks all vulgarity, violence, and haste in those who behold it with appreciation; and it is greatly to the credit of contemporary literature that so many writers have shown such appreciation.

It is a mistake to maintain, as it has long been the fashion to maintain, that very great excellence in literature is long in obtaining recognition. All the really great poets of this greatly poetic century have obtained an almost immediate recognition from a large number of admirers; and, if the immediate acknowledgement of Wordsworth, Keats, Coleridge, and Shelley, though wide, was very partial, the phenomenon is explicable by the presence in their works, especially in their earlier works, of defects and shortcomings which were very irritating and far more manifest than their beauties. But works which, in the main, are of really classical power and perfection have seldom had to wait long for a wide and hearty welcome; and here is a writer whose first book contains a larger proportion of classical and cultured perfection than is commonly to be found in the latest and most mature work of established classics.

It would take a big book, like Mr. Lionel Johnson's upon Thomas Hardy, to give a full and rational statement of the peculiar merits of the first little volumes of Mrs. Meynell. I can note only a few important points which seem to have been overlooked by other writers.

Her prose, at its best, is the purest and most

beautiful of prose. It is the only prose that is perfectly artistic, simply because it is perfectly and elaborately beautiful, without ever exceeding the limits of prose. Nearly all the finest prose in our language occasionally breaks through the metrical bounds of prose, and degenerates into verse. The prose of Hooker, Jeremy Taylor, and Milton often falls into sentences which are scannable by metres of two feet, with a major and minor accent. For example, Hooker's saying, 'Such per″fect fri′ends are tru″th and lov′e that nei″ther liv′es where bo″th are no′t,' is a pure iambic tetrameter. But the simplest iambic foot of two syllables and one accent is religiously kept to in Mrs. Meynell's Essays, and she never falls into the artistic error, which nearly all other great writers sometimes commit, of changing the unequalled grace of her *walk* into a passage of *dance*; for that is the exact difference between prose, of which the unit is the iambic *foot*, and verse, of which the lowest division is the *metre*, of two feet. There are many excellent writers who, like Newman, have adhered strictly to the rule of prose; but such writers have never given, or even perhaps aimed at giving, to prose the greatest artistic beauty, by evoking its proper music, while obeying its primary law. Rare as the most excellent poetry is, the most excellent prose is yet rarer.

Fewer persons can walk well than can dance well, and it is probably as seldom a faculty that qualifies a man to criticize first-rate prose as that which enables him to judge what is the best verse. I venture to say of Mrs. Meynell's prose what Jeffrey said, in the *Edinburgh Review*, of Keats's poetry, that it supplies a test of the reader's literary capacity.

But I wish to make a claim for something more than unapproachable beauty, in much of Mrs. Meynell's writing, whether prose or verse—a claim which even her best critics have rather hinted and implied than boldly stated. In a sense in which the term can scarcely be applied to the writing of any other woman, ancient or modern, it seems to me that hers is *great*. If, as some one has said, a poet is to be judged by his best, however little there may be of it, Mrs. Meynell's poetic faculty can scarcely be overpraised. There is a little poem, lately printed anonymously in a newspaper, as Keats's 'Belle Dame sans Merci' was, which has never been surpassed by any English poet since the *Indicator* printed, some seventy years ago, that lyric which is now acknowledged by the best judges to be the finest lyric in our language. Here is Mrs. Meynell's 'Belle Dame sans Merci', which, I venture to prophesy, will some day rank not far below that of Keats—

Why wilt thou chide,
Who hast attained to be denied?
Oh learn, above
All price is my refusal, Love.
My sacred Nay
Was never cheapened by the way.
Thy single sorrow crowns thee lord
Of an unpurchasable word.

Oh strong, Oh pure!
As Yea makes happier loves secure,
I vow thee this
Unique rejection of a kiss.
I guard for thee
This jealous sad monopoly.
I seal this honour thine; none dare
Hope for a part in thy despair.

How incomparably noble, strong, passionate, and pure those words of consolation to the one lover who has come so near as to be denied! Nothing in Mrs. Meynell's exquisite little volume of youthful verse, which was reprinted four years ago, is to be compared with this little poem; and her second volume of Essays, just reprinted from the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Fortnightly Review*, testifies equally to a power of growth which must seem incredible to those who know the first volume only.

'The Colour of Life; and other Essays on Things Seen and Heard,' consists of only fourteen very short pieces. Why they were limited to this number I cannot see; for, out of a hundred and fifty or two hundred essays which this lady has contributed anonymously, during the past three or four years, to the *Pall Mall Gazette* and other journals, forty or fifty seem to have as good a claim to coming out again in book form. They have all, more or less, the merit in an extraordinary degree of being disquisitions 'on things seen and heard', in the sense which Lord Bacon used when he entitled his book, *Cogitata et Visa*. The things seen and heard are, for the most part, matters of the most common and daily interest; but they are so seen and heard that there is no 'dailiness' in their treatment, having in every case the double novelty which attaches to the 'common' when submitted to the splendour of perception to which nothing is common.

In her lightest Essay there is indicated some new principle or significance, for insight into which all understanding readers must feel that they are permanently the better. In many, very many cases a great

and entire change in the popular aspect of some important matter has been wrought by some light touch of her good-natured and delicate satire. There is a truly Baconian depth and simplicity of wisdom, and finality in the expression of it, which can be found nowhere else, in such abundance, in modern literature, and very seldom in old; but this weight of finest wisdom is borne with such grace, ease, and unpretentiousness that many readers will fail at first to discern its solidity. There are scores and scores of sentences which might have come direct from Lord Bacon's Essays.

There is, however, a sphere of contemplative wisdom into which even Lord Bacon never attempted to soar, but in which Mrs. Meynell moves at an altitude and with a freedom for the like of which, at all events in any female writer, we must go back to Mme. de Guyon or St. Frances de Chantal. Here is a specimen of one of those heights of thought which are to be attained only by *not* thinking, and by patient and passive spiritual observation. It is characteristic of Mrs. Meynell that this thought should come in at the end of a little Essay on the abuse of the Flower as a means of decoration of upholstery and ironmongery. One is reminded, in this as in many of her Essays, of Bishop Berkeley's Essay on Tar-water, which is a bona fide account of the merits of that fluid as a common medicament, but which ends by soaring into infinite, but never breathless or indefinite, spiritual apprehensions.

> Who has ever multiplied his delights? or who has ever gained the granting of the most foolish of his wishes—the prayer for reiteration? It is a curious slight to generous Fate that man should, like a child, ask for one thing many times. Her answer is a resembling but a new and single

gift; until the day when she shall make the one tremendous difference between her gifts—and make it perhaps in secret—by naming one of them the ultimate.

There is an Essay of only two pages in length in this new volume, which will for ever silence an infinite amount of futile talk about the impermanence of most of the cleverest modern art, by a simple remark which everybody must wonder that he had not made for himself, though nobody has made it before.

The brilliant talent which has quite lately and quite suddenly arisen, to devote itself to the use of the day or the week, in illustrated papers—the enormous production of art in black and white—is assuredly a confession that the Honours of Mortality are worth working for. Fifty years ago, men worked for the honours of immortality: these were the commonplace of their ambition; they declined to attend to the beauty of things of use that were destined to be broken and worn out, and looked forward to surviving themselves by painting bad pictures. So that what to do with their bad pictures, in addition to our own, has become the problem of the nation and of the householder alike. To-day men have begun to learn that their sons will be grateful to them for few bequests. Art consents at last to work upon the tissue and the china that are doomed to the natural and necessary end—destruction; art shows a most dignified alacrity to do her best, daily, for the 'process' and for oblivion. Doubtless this abandonment of hopes so large at once and so cheap costs the artist something; nay, it implies an acceptance of the inevitable that is not less than heroic. And the reward has been in the singular and manifest increase of vitality in this work which is done for so short a life. Fittingly, indeed, does life reward the acceptance of death, inasmuch as to die is to have been alive. There is a real circulation of blood—quick use, brief beauty, abolition, recreation. The honour of the day is for ever the honour

of that day. It goes into the treasury of things that are honestly and completely ended and done with. Who of the wise would hesitate ? To be honourable for one day—one named and dated day separate from all other days of the ages—or to be for an unlimited time tedious ?

There are two pieces of criticism in Mrs. Meynell's new volume of prose which seem to me as far to surpass everything in her first volume as 'Why wilt thou chide ?' surpasses all that appeared in her first volume of poetry—which, by the way, has lately been supplemented by a very small privately printed collection which she calls *Other Poems*—all exquisite, and written with a firmer hand and greater mastery of verse than were apparent in the published collection. These two pieces are on the acting of Eleonora Duse, and on Japanese art. I have already filled so much space that I must content myself with asking my readers to accept my opinion on these pieces for what they may think it is worth. Concerning the Essay on Eleonora Duse, I need only endorse the opinion of a very great contemporary, who has said of it that 'it reaches the high-water mark of literary criticism in our time'; but I must simply stake whatever character I may have for critical discernment on my unsupported assertion that the other Essay, called 'Symmetry and Incident', rises far above that 'high-water mark', and that we must go back to Goethe, Lessing, and Hegel if we would discover any piece of criticism so novel, of such far-reaching importance, so moderate, so simple, so conclusive—in a word, so *great*.

EXPRESSION IN ARCHITECTURE

[*St. James's Gazette*, October 30, 1886.]

Each of the many 'styles', as they are called, of architecture has its proper expression: the result of some particular mode of construction and of its accentuation by a particular system of decoration. The dullest assistant in an architect's office could not fail to develop in his designs the typical expression of the Egyptian, Greek, Romanesque, Byzantine, Moresque, Pointed, or Tudor architecture, so long as he adhered to traditional constructional methods and decorative details. Nevertheless, the causes of expression in each style are for the most part extremely subtle and difficult of analysis. Indeed, such subtlety and obscurity, as to its origin, is inherent in all artistic expression, which is admirable in proportion to the combination in it of obviousness to the sense and obscurity to the understanding of the beholder.

Everybody knows that this is true of painting, poetry, and still more of music. The more capable the critic, the less he will profess himself able to account for more than a very small proportion of the beauties he describes and endeavours to point out. The power, even of the uncultivated eye, to discern with the utmost clearness effects the causes of which are very subtle may be usefully illustrated by two or three simple examples. The leaf of the tulip-tree suggests to the eye an idea of hugeness which is quite independent of actual size. Not one person in a thousand of those who have perceived this has discerned its cause. Perhaps no one has ever endeavoured to

do so. The leaf is large, but not so large as a common vine-leaf. It is formed of a broad surface, which runs into a blunt angle on either side, and is projected at the top into a second almost square and disproportionately large space, which looks as if the end of the leaf had been truncated in order to bring it into some sort of proportion with its sides. Here the idea of size is first suggested by the great *comparative* size of one member, and is much increased by the indefinite suggestion of a still greater and more disproportionate size by its apparent truncation. The effect, to compare great things with small, is something like that of the hugeness given by Michel Angelo to the figure of the Creator in the 'Creation of Eve' in the Sistine Chapel—an effect which, it cannot be denied to those who charge the artist not only with exaggeration but deformity, *is* obtained by deformity; but the thing is done with full consciousness and of a set purpose, which is perfectly attained.

Again, anybody can see, at least when it is pointed out, the literally infinite difference of effect between the parabolic 'ovolo' of the Doric capital and the quarter-round of the similarly placed moulding in the 'Tuscan' The magnificence of the one and the meanness of the other is discerned without any consciousness of 'conic sections', which teach that the one curve is actually finite and the other infinite. Nor can it be considered wonderful that mental perception should so far outrun rational consciousness, when it is remembered that the impressions of the external senses themselves are sometimes caused and differentiated by impulses which are all but infinitely minute and all but infinitely beyond our power to discern

in their elementary units. The difference between red and green, for example, is nothing but the difference between the numbers of millions of vibrations, in one inch of space, of light travelling at the rate of about 200,000 miles a second. That is to say, the sense of sight is clearly affected by and unconsciously measures pulsations, the number of which occurring in one second of time is expressed by that number of millions of vibrations multiplied into the number of inches in 200,000 miles. The discernment by the musician's ear and the painter's eye of the extreme subtleties of *proportion* in the vibrations of air and ether is still more marvellous. The wonder is yet further increased, when it is found that the mind and senses are able to take in simultaneously many sets of such incalculable impressions and to *feel* them all in their relative bearings. To take one of the simplest examples—the pure type of Greek temple architecture. The commonest eye which has attained to that first condition of the perception of artistic character, the power of *attention*, can discern the supreme and faultless beauty of the Parthenon ; and can feel at a glance, separately and in sum, the value of the entasis and fluting of the shaft, the triple channel incised in its neck just under the capital, the great curve of the ovolo, the abacus, the peculiar mouldings of the entablature, the gutta, triglyphs, &c.—all producing a unity of effect, which would be most seriously damaged by the absence of any one feature. Each detail has its aesthetic rationale which is its true *raison d'être*—for constructively the Doric temple is but the petrifaction of an edifice in wood—and not one spectator in a thousand has the least consciousness of the cause of the effect in any one

detail, though he sees that effect as clear as day. In pure pointed architecture wherein the details, all working to one effect, are far more numerous and dependent on still obscurer principles, the impression on the eye is equally simple.

There are three degrees of expressiveness in architectural work. The first, as I have said, is necessarily obtained by unintelligent adherence to the general type. Such is the degree of expression which is alone to be found in the vast majority of modern and even ancient edifices. The second arises when the architect has a more or less clear understanding of the artistic principle as well as of the actual details of the style, and works with skill and means sufficient to convey his apprehension of that principle. The result to the beholder is a sense of living unity, which he may not be able to explain to himself, but which the architect could explain to him quite easily; for his work has been a conscious process, and can therefore be described. Cologne Cathedral is the finest specimen of this conscious carrying out of principle which the world possesses. But between this degree and the third there is as much difference as there is in poetry between a fine and elaborate metre and a strain of delicate rhythm, or as there is between such a phrase as 'An honest man's the noblest work of God', and such another as

> Light thickens, and the crow
> Makes wing to the rooky wood.

An architect capable of this third degree of expression adds to the often almost unfathomable subtleties of expression abiding in the fixed forms of his style, other subtleties of his own, which, though perfectly tangible

and effective in their results, are always more or less beyond analysis. Every work of such an architect will bear some trait of modesty, pathos, dignity, tender reverence, or some other quality of the heart—the seat of genius—which the most arduous and splendid talent can never rival; and a little parish church, in his hands, will often give an impression of actual greatness which another architect will not be able to put into the bulk of a cathedral. . . .

Such expression is as far beyond analysis as it is beyond imitation, arising as it does from mental and emotional processes and associations which are too subtle to be brought into consciousness.

ARCHITECTURE AND ARCHITECTURAL CRITICISM

[*St. James's Gazette*, April 30, 1886.]

About thirty years ago the current of architectural criticism in England was entirely changed by the works of Mr. Ruskin. From the days of the elder Pugin till those of Mr. Ruskin, architectural criticism had been steadily advancing upon strict lines of principle, beginning in the elementary laws of construction in their simplest applications, and tracing them into the elaborate flower of their last developments; the flower being judged as more or less beautiful according to its demonstrable fidelity to certain simple and all-pervading laws. The criticism of those laws was not always very clear, nor the endeavour to obey them perfectly successful; but law was, in the main, the guiding-star alike of critic and architect. Mr. Ruskin

changed all this. He made, indeed, many exquisitely worded professions of faith in constructive law as underlying all beauty; but his real affections carried him to an almost exclusive admiration of that style of building in which beauty is regarded as independent of any single structural law, though, of course, it is obedient to laws of its own; beauty, indeed, being nothing but visible law. Italian 'Gothic' is not a real style at all; but the wreck of several preceding and imperfect styles, grown over with a mass of parasitical and accidental decoration. The introduction of the pointed arch—which, in the north, acted upon the heavy Romanesque as a spark of fire introduced into a pile of timber, converting it into heaven-aspiring flame—was, all through the best times of mediaeval Italian architecture, nothing but one among its many decorative details.

The world has seen five great styles; three of which only are of the highest imaginative and symbolical character—namely, the Egyptian, the Greek, and the Northern Gothic. The two others, the Romanesque and the Saracenic, are without any such essential character; and owe their integrity as styles, the one to the round arch as a utilitarian, the other to the horse-shoe arch as a fanciful, centre of reference. It is probable, all but certain, that there never can arise any future style of architecture to rival the three great primitive modes above named in what may be described as essentially symbolic character; for that character depends upon a constant reference to the great elementary fact of construction, weight of material; and this fact is used and confronted, in these three architectures, in the only three possible

methods. The lines and masses of the Egyptian temple all express simple weight, and, symbolically, irresistible material power. Those of the Greek temple are divided into two opposing sets. The pediment, in its mass and all its details, expresses the gravitating force of the material; but everything beneath the tile or abacus, which is the neutral point, expresses active and effectual resistance to the superincumbent mass, and, symbolically, the exact balance of the material and spiritual. In the Northern Gothic the whole mass soars, the material itself becoming the simplest and most forcible expression of the spiritual by the entire reversal of the primary characteristic of matter. It would take many pages to analyse the details of these three characters; but the different treatment of the column alone sufficiently indicates their nature. The Egyptian shaft bulges as it approaches the earth, as if suffering from the superincumbent mass; there is a curve or 'entasis' in the Greek column; but it is high up, and, so far from seeming to be caused by weight, it conveys the idea of elastic living power gathering itself together as it rises to meet its task; the Gothic shaft flies up like a sheaf of arrows, without any reference to weight either suffered from or competently opposed, and loses itself in the lines of a roof which itself seems to soar. The bulge of the Egyptian column and the elastic entasis of the Greek are frequently multiplied to the eye by a number of perpendicular lines, between which, in the Egyptian, the mass of the column protrudes, while in the Greek it recedes in hollow flutings. The Egyptian column and the purest Greek, the Doric, has no base; but the Ionic has a base, the moulding of which recedes in the middle

—that is, at the point where it would bulge if it suffered from weight. The Greek shaft has a deep channel cut just sufficiently far below the abacus to be well seen; thus making a voluntary and manifest sacrifice of power exactly where it is most required. And so on.

It may be objected to the criticism which proclaims these and the like significatory purposes in architecture, that the Doric temple, for example, is an almost exact repetition in stone of a probably aboriginal wooden hut—its trunks of trees for columns, its triglyphs for the ends of joists, &c. The whole and vast difference lies in that 'almost': just as a story in Boccaccio differs immensely in its significance from the same story almost exactly reproduced in a play by Shakespeare, or as some prehistoric incident may be supposed to differ from its glorification by a few trifling additions or omissions in a Greek myth.

Of course, when criticism had 'gone off the lines', to follow Mr. Ruskin, practical architecture followed. We have had several 'Gothic' architects of genius superior to that of Scott; but we have never since had one who has discerned so fully and obeyed so closely the great principle of Gothic expression; and, as time goes on, we seem to be tending more and more to the Italian indifference to the pointed arch and its constructional corollaries, except in so far as they are good as ornamental adjuncts.

Professor Baldwin Brown in *From Schola to Cathedral*[1] has traced, with uncommon learning and success, the constructive progress of Christian architecture, from

[1] *From Schola to Cathedral.* A Study of Early Christian Architecture and its Relation to the Life of the Church. By G. Baldwin Brown. (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1886.)

the first small apsidal halls, or scholæ, erected for funeral rites and general gatherings by the Church before the time of Constantine. 'Halls of meeting were used by Christians of the "ages of persecution" long before there can have been any question of copying pagan basilicas.' From these the Professor tracks the growth of architecture rather through the constructional forms of the ancient Jewish synagogue than through those of the less congenial basilica. A large part of the work is devoted to the history of the round arch and dome—of which it is noteworthy that the first authentic example, on any scale worthy of being called architectural, remains to this day the largest and most scientifically executed. As the Pantheon is the first and also the culminating example of a single-domed building, so St. Sophia is well proved by Professor Brown to be the first and last great example of the successful adaptation of a series of domes to the roofing in of a building adapted to Catholic use on a great scale. A basilican ground-plan roofed with domes and producing admirable harmony of effect, was perhaps the greatest triumph of architectural skill ever attained; but it was too difficult and costly to be repeated with variations. Professor Brown's history is carried down to and ends with the extinction of the 'Romanesque' in the north by the pointed arch; the introduction of which, according to M. Viollet-Le-Duc, arose 'simply from a change in the setting-out of the ancient cross-vault on a square plan of the Roman and Romanesque builders. So soon as the diagonal arches of this vault were constructed as half-circles instead of the original weak elliptical curves, the adoption of the pointed arch was necessary to the proper completion

of the vault; the use of the pointed arch enabled cross-vaults to be constructed on oblong ground-plans; and the whole of the other consequences followed which made the architecture of the Gothic period.'

Though Professor Brown ends his book with the commencement of Gothic architecture properly understood, he does not do so without a wholesome return to the old lines of criticism. He does not, indeed, trace the spirit and significance of this style in its details, all of which, as we have indicated, tend or should tend to the single expression of 'aspiration'; but he roundly and uncompromisingly asserts this to be its supreme artistic purpose. He does not—for it was no part of the business he had in hand—allude to the fact that Egyptian and Greek architectures occupy, together with the Gothic, positions of otherwise quite solitary artistic eminence; but he gathers everything from the histories of these styles which can possibly help his attainment of his object—the constructional history of Christian architecture down to the death of the Romanesque.

LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL

[*St. James's Gazette*, March 3, 1887.]

The proposed cathedral at Liverpool, which will probably cost about half a million of money, is not an opportunity that ought to be thrown away. It seems to be decided, as it should be, that the style shall be Gothic; and three designs are now before the public, two of which are really and the third at least nominally and in many of its details Gothic. This style has been

sufficiently proved, in some recent articles in this journal, to be the only manner of building fitted for modern ecclesiastical architecture; but, indeed, no proof that it is so is required. Every child who has been brought up in Christian ideas can see at a glance, though he may not be able to render a reason for his perception, that the Oratory at Brompton, for example, has not a Christian character about it, and that Westminster Abbey has; and every spectator with a degree of perception a little beyond that of a child can see that the round-arched Norman type, though far better suited for churches than the Renaissance of St. Paul's or the aforesaid Oratory, is a thing of the past. To speak of the Pointed architecture of the present day as a mere dilettante 'revival' is to cast an unmerited slur upon it. There is no dilettantism about the works of such architects as Street, Butterfield, Pearson, and Bodley; though there may be occasionally peculiarities and even eccentricities in them. These and several other English architects are working in as living and original a way on the lines of the one great ecclesiastical style as any of the architects of the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries ever did; and it only wants the ripening lapse of three or four centuries to set their works upon exactly the same level with those of the builders of the best times. We have, indeed, no architect who could have designed Strasburg or Canterbury; but the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had very few who could have built the new Law Courts or the best churches of Pearson. These and many other contemporary edifices are the works of true artists—of men who have had a living feeling of the significance of the type of architecture they adopted, and have therefore

moved freely in the strict bonds of its law, and have produced new forms of beauty in perfect accordance with it.

Of the three designs submitted for the Liverpool Cathedral, two (namely, those of Messrs. Bodley and Garner and Mr. James Brooks), though open to criticism, are works of true artists deeply imbued with the Gothic idea which was explained a few weeks ago in these pages. Mr. Brooks's design is almost perfectly orthodox and yet very original; a number of artistic effects of the highest power and beauty being obtained, for instance, by covering the whole breadth of the aisles with a gallery having windows of the same size as those of the aisles, and thus providing that the clerestory, which usually rises from the aisle roof, does not begin until the external walls have attained an extraordinary altitude. Another proof of Mr. Brooks's power as an artist is the exterior of the 'St. John's Chapel' at the south-east corner of the cathedral, whereby attention is called in the most effective way to this leading feature of height of wall; the chapel rising only to the height of the aisle proper, and sending up flying buttresses clear over its own roof on to the buttresses that strengthen the main building, at the point where the gallery roof meets them. The fault of this design lies, to our mind, in the west front; which is flanked by two slim towers with lofty spires, that do not seem to make one block with the main building, as these features do in the best ancient works, but have a semi-detached *campanile* look, at direct variance with the feeling of Northern Gothic, though common enough in the architecture of Italy, in which no true Gothic feeling ever existed. The peculiarity of the site, which has breadth

but is deficient in length, indicates a completely opposite treatment. What is wanting in length should be made up in the height and compactness of the whole mass of the building. Two solid towers, one or both being without spires, and closed up more nearly together, would have made this design one of the most complete efforts of modern architecture. Spires are never so effective as when they have the semblance of being mere jets of aspiring flame, escaped, as it were, from the huge furnace of ascending ardour expressed by the thousands upon thousands of soaring lines of the main building. The front of Strasburg—one of the greatest specimens of architecture in the world—owes much of its beauty to this compactness, and to the fact that only one of the flanking towers carries a spire. The west front, in the design of Messrs. Bodley and Garner, is far superior to that of Mr. Brooks, the flanking towers and spires having the orthodox Gothic character to which Mr. Brooks's semi-campaniles are quite opposed. In other respects, too, the Bodley design is a grave and noble work, and quite worthy of the occasion, though without such startling and, at the same time, perfectly artistic originalities as have been pointed out in that of his competitor.

As to the third design—though it is evidently the work of a very skilful and thoughtful builder, and full of ingenuities and plausible adaptations to 'the wants of the time'—it can scarcely be considered as the work of an architect at all, if architecture is to be regarded as really one of the fine arts and the architect as a true artist. All unity of idea and feeling is avowedly cast to the winds. Behind the west front of Peterborough rises the dome of St. Paul's; and all the 'architectural'

details, externally and internally, are devised to corroborate and take part in this artistically impossible conjunction. The head of a bulldog on the body of a greyhound would not be a more revolting incongruity. If the people of Liverpool want a great preaching-hall, they should instruct Mr. Emerson to build them one (which might be done, with all splendid and appropriate 'decorations', for half the money they are talking of spending on their 'cathedral'); but do not let them fancy that they are getting a work of art by massing innumerable details of absolutely incompatible styles. The dome is a part of a circular-arched mode of building. It has never, except in the hands of the Saracenic architects, been developed into a true style; though the genius of the architects of St. Sophia, St. Peter's, and St. Paul's have got great effect out of it in conjunction with a round-arched construction and classical details. It is quite impossible, without drawings, to give the reader any idea of the sensation which is produced by the incessant violations of artistic law—Mr. Emerson's admirers call them 'originalities'—in this design. All that can be done in the space at command is to quote a few of Mr. Emerson's printed explanations and justifications of his work. 'To suit the city and the requirements of our modern service a new departure is desirable. . . . The architecture, out of respect to the sentiment of the people (!), should follow the principles and express the feeling of our grand old Gothic cathedrals. To effect this combination, and design a cathedral which shall be worthy of the second city in the British Empire, has been my aim.' How much Mr. Emerson sympathizes with 'the feeling of our grand old Gothic cathedrals' is

shown by his emphatic condemnation of 'the painfully contracted effect produced by two tall towers immediately flanking the nave; as in the case of the cathedrals at Cologne, Chartres, Rouen, Brussels, Lichfield, York, the Abbey at Westminster, and numbers of others'—i. e. all the finest Gothic cathedrals in the world! 'The mystery affected by the religious bodies in the Middle Ages . . . no longer exists, and modern feeling demands, &c.' 'If a precedent be required for the introduction of a dome to Gothic architecture, the magnificent examples of Sta. Maria del Fiore and the Baptisteries at Pisa and Florence may suffice. . . . Moreover, the beautiful Mahommedan domes so common in the East are practically Gothic.' Is this the way that a true artist would feel and write? Let our readers refer to the text of Mr. Emerson's long account of his design, if they require any further ground for sharing the alarm which must be felt by every lover of architecture at the prospect—only too probable—of this design being adopted. It is commonly supposed that Mr. Ruskin's writings have educated the public in the matter of architectural taste; but what shall we think when we find an apologist of Mr. Emerson's plans writing thus in a periodical of high authority on matters of building: 'The design as a whole is unquestionably a remarkably bold and original one; it has the merit, so unhappily rare in modern architecture, of being a departure from mere precedent, an effort to think out a design in a form suitable to the special circumstances of the case, and to convey into one whole hints derived from various buildings of various styles. . . . The whole impression is rather Classic than Gothic. . . . We cannot help feeling that the architect might have done more justice to his very

bold conception if he had treated what is in reality a Classic composition with a more Classic form of detail; in fact, that it means to be a Classic design, but somehow or other has worked itself out Gothic.' This from one of the most earnest and influential advocates of Mr. Emerson's plans. Surely it would be only to weaken the case against this design to add anything to the architect's justification and his apologist's commendation of it! The whole question of architectural style is treated by both of them as being simply a question as to what sort of 'ornaments' shall be stuck on to the walls and roof of that *sine qua non*, a big preaching-hall—which is, after all, not a *sine qua non*. Musical festivals are the only 'functions' which, in a modern English cathedral, could require more free space than is supplied by the designs of Mr. Brooks and Mr. Bodley. People do not go in their tens of thousands nowadays to hear Bishops preach; and if it is a music-hall that the Liverpool people want, they would do better to leave out nave, aisles, transepts, &c., and have a great bona fide domed room at once, like that at Kensington Gore.[1]

CHURCHES AND PREACHING-HALLS

[*St. James's Gazette*, March 10, 1887.]

To the Editor.

Sir.—The letter of a 'Student', replying to my article on the designs for the Liverpool Cathedral, is fully answered by anticipation in the series of papers on 'Architectural Styles' which appeared a few weeks

[1] [The scheme for a cathedral was postponed from 1888 to 1901, and the cathedral was eventually built from the designs of Mr. G. Gilbert Scott, jointly with Mr. G. F. Bodley.]

ago in the *St. James's Gazette*;[1] but if you will allow me, I will take occasion by his letter to expose more fully some of the popular fallacies of the day in connexion with this subject.

It is quite true, as a 'Student' indicates, that some of our best modern architects have departed, more or less, from the old Gothic lines; but to say of Gothic architecture that our best architects can 'make nothing of it' is certainly a startling assertion, in face of the fact that during the past forty years probably as many purely Gothic churches have been built in England as were raised in this country during the three centuries after the introduction of the pointed arch, and that our best architects have been chiefly engaged in the work. That some of these have not been quite true to the style in detail cannot be denied; but the departure has been only in detail, and has consisted mainly in the occasional adoption of a mode of decoration which savours too much of the 'Italian' Gothic, in which beauty of detail is constantly an independent factor, instead of being strictly subordinated to one expressional idea, as it is in Northern Gothic. For this superficial failure of architectural orthodoxy Mr. Ruskin is probably responsible. But such small excrescences have no more disturbed the essentially Gothic character of the church-building of the past forty years than the wall-flower growing from its crannies disturbs that of an old pointed arch. Nevertheless such insignificant and temporary corruptions have certainly encouraged the popular notion that, somehow or other, we have thereby been 'developing' the ancient style. A more important fallacy is one

[1] Reprinted in *Principle in Art, &c.*, 1889.

which a good many persons share with the 'Student', in regarding Gothic architecture as a style of which the significance has passed away never to be renewed. What is the 'significance' of Northern Gothic? That question was fully answered in the series of articles you lately printed. Its significance is Christianity, and only when Christianity is extinct can Gothic architecture become so. If I remember rightly, Archdeacon Farrar concluded a recent lecture by affirming his belief that, in course of time, Christianity would attain to the heights and depths of spiritual inspiration which are to be found in the poems of Mr. Robert Browning. Of course, in such a case Northern Gothic would be superseded, and worship would require some new architectural expression; but at present there is no sign whatever of such a popular development of our religion, and I can form no idea of what its architectural correlative might be like. At all events, we shall not make any approach to it by merely putting the dome of St. Paul's behind the west front of Peterborough, or by decorating our ceilings with Gothic groins intersecting each other and relieved by Renaissance panels or 'coffers'. I cannot quite fathom the 'Student's' dictum that 'there can be no real art-life which fails to express modernism'; but I suppose he means to defend Mr. Emerson's design by implying that, because it expresses 'modernism', it is 'art-life'. And certainly if to express a certain kind of 'modernism' be 'art-life', then there can be no doubt that this design is art. It is clever, lawless, incongruous, unprincipled; and is to 'art-life' what 'life' itself is to the youngster with too much money in his pocket who comes to London for the purpose of 'going the rounds'.

I will spare the 'Student' any further examination of the terms of his letter, and will conclude by observing that what the 'modernism' which he and so many others hanker after practically means, when denuded of mist, is that a church should be a handsome preaching-hall or music-room, somewhat after the fashion of the Criterion or Holborn Restaurants; having, however, a dome or a row of pointed windows, and a few other features of a sufficiently 'ecclesiastical' character to give congruity to the act of taking off one's hat and hiding one's face in it on first entering. It is quite a mistake, however, to imagine that all, or even the majority of church-goers, 'see life' altogether in this its 'modernism'. The reason why Gothic architecture has of late received so great an increase of vitality is that Christianity itself has revived. It is the preaching-hall, not the cathedral, which is now the anachronism. Every one of the modern preacher's auditors can read, and many of them know as much and can think as well as he can. Religious worship is becoming more and more what it was of old—an *act*. Sacramentalism, not 'modernism', in the 'Student's' acceptation of the word, is the power which is daily growing in the Church, and which causes that purest expression of sacramentalism, the Gothic temple, to sprout naturally from the earth in every parish of England. This spirit is even penetrating obscurely and unconsciously the 'Low' Church. 'I cannot help thinking,' wrote General Gordon, 'that religion has much to do with the body.' This intimate participation of the body in the life and acts of the spirit—always fully recognized by that Church which built all the great cathedrals in order to give expression to

such participation—is the idea which is at the bottom of sacramentalism, and the source of the immense attraction which is now drawing high and low to those symbolic acts and rites which few now venture to call mummeries, and in which thousands and thousands find a power of teaching which words are inadequate to convey. The very walls of a Gothic church 'teach' as no language can—not by appealing to thought, as words do, but by an actual effect upon the senses. It is all very well to say that prayer should be as easily and fervently offered in a whitewashed conventicle as in a Gothic cathedral. Theorists on prayer naturally say so; but do people who pray say so? It may or may not be humiliating to admit that 'the body has so much to do with religion' that the sight of torrents of lines soaring from floor to roof-ridge helps the soul to soar in prayer, or that the surroundings of traceries and foliage expressly designed to symbolize life as moving freely in the strictest bonds of law conveys the peace of submission into the heart. It is a simple fact that it is so; and while it remains so Gothic architecture will continue to be the architecture of Christianity—a 'phase' of mind which will in all probability be alive and active when our 'modernism' has become a very ancient and forgotten thing indeed.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

C. P.

JAPANESE HOUSES [1]

[*St. James's Gazette*, April 13, 1888.]

Mr. Morse has made a readable book out of an exceedingly small subject—Japanese architecture. Earthquakes, fires, limitation to wood and clay as materials, and an extraordinary narrowness and fixity of tastes and domestic requirements have combined to prevent Japanese building from attaining even the poorest architectural character; though, as we all know, the furniture and interior wall-decoration of the extraordinary race which combines the simplicity of the savage with some of the refinements and subtilties of the purest civilization, abound in beauties as peculiar as they are artistic. Although the comparison would probably not be allowed by Mr. Morse, the conclusion to be drawn from his elaborately illustrated work is that the old 'Elizabethan' thatched and tiled cottage is the nearest European counterpart to the ordinary Japanese house; the main difference being that the irregularities and absence of a duplicate 'symmetry' in the former are matters of conscious intention in the latter. The vulgar duplication of parts, which is the guiding rule of beauty in the building and decoration of the modern British householder, appears to be the abhorrence of the Japanese; and in its elaborate avoidance we find a principal clue to the singular character of all that may be called artistic in Japanese decoration. Our readers will at once recognize this fact, if they will only generalize and analyse their

[1] *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings.* By Edward S. Morse (London: Sampson Low, 1888.)

impression of what they already know of this school of ornament; but, as a typical example, they may be referred to the management of a ceiling in the house of a wealthy Japanese, an illustration of which is given by Mr. Morse. This ceiling is unequally and diagonally divided by a great beam, which consists simply of the trunk of an irregularly grown tree. On one side of this winding division the ceiling consists of plain but finely grained boards laid side by side through the full extent of the compartment; and on the other side of the beam the space is filled up with small, square, and highly decorated panels. Strong and unexpected contrast, and the peculiar character of natural objects emphasized without being 'conventionalized', are the leading elements of that style of decoration which has deservedly obtained the admiration and imitation of European artists.

The sense of beauty shown in Japanese decoration is extremely acute and at the same time extremely limited in its development. The individual characters of plants, flowers, and birds are grasped and depicted with what seems an almost magical power of perception. A Japanese decorator will reveal more beauty in a crooked stick of plum or cherry tree, with a bud on one limb of it and a blossom or two on the other, than our best European painters know how to evoke from an entire conservatory of flowers. A consequence of this intense perception, and one of the chief means of conveying it, is the principle of isolation; which may be considered as making a third with the principles of contrast and emphasis in Japanese decoration. Thus a flying heron or a spray of foliage will cross a single corner of the leaf of a large screen, all the rest being

a vacant field of black varnish. Every Japanese living-room has its flower-vase and its pictures; but the vase will never contain more than two or three strongly-contrasted sprays, and the recess appointed for the exhibition of pictures has never more than one at a time, though the proprietor of the house may be a wealthy connoisseur with a great collection of paintings shut up in his store-rooms. An exceeding perfection exceedingly limited is also the character of the faculty of composition or arrangement in Japanese art. It rejoices in gardens; but these, though usually very small, are too much for the national faculty, which seems to be bewildered by having to deal with more than two or three simple objects at a time. A Japanese garden is a piece of Cockneyism realizing the daintiest dream of the small City clerk. The garden of Mr. Wemmick, in *Great Expectations*, with its moat, drawbridge, 'bower about a dozen yards off, but approached by such ingenious twists of path that it took a long time to get at it'; its 'ornamental lake, with an island in the middle which might have been the salad for a supper'; its fountain; its little water-mill, set a-going by taking a cork out of a pipe, &c., might have been transported without a change from the abode of the better sort of Japanese householder. Most curiously mixed with an exquisite perception of beauty in single objects, is a Cockney love for any natural 'curiosity'—such as contorted trunks of trees, one or two of which are generally found as partition-posts or transverse ceiling-beams in a room which is otherwise finished with the most artificial refinement. A wealthy Japanese will transport a big ugly boulder from mountains hundreds of miles away,

if it has anything unusual in its shape, in order to stick it up in his garden ; the paths of which are also almost invariably covered with perfectly useless 'stepping-stones', consisting of large flags brought from great distances and at great expense for the sake of their shapeless outlines.

Mr. Morse does not seem to have noticed, much less to have explained, this singular mixture—as it must seem to us barbarians—of the finest taste and utter tastelessness. His main theme is, however, the constructive features of the Japanese edifice. These he does his best to glorify, but, when all is said, it must be admitted by candid criticism that the Japanese house is only a step or two above the savage's wigwam, and that the Japanese temple has the strongest resemblance to a large thatched barn. Though wood is almost universally the material, some of the commonest rules of carpentry are ignorantly violated ; the fireplace is a hole in the floor, and the chimney is another in the roof ; and half, or perhaps the whole, of one side of the sitting-room is open to the air, though snow may be on the ground. External decoration is limited chiefly to the roof-ridge ; the beauty of which is considered as much enhanced by the termination of the roof-tree in turned-up horns and by various forms of ridge-tiles or thatched cappings all designed, as it appears to us, without any sense of effect beyond that which is to be derived from mere oddity. There is also in the Japanese house a uniformity of arrangement which seems to indicate a civilization checked for ever in its earliest stage. The chief apartment of each house is as like that of every other as the nest of each chaffinch is like that of every other. Of all the

many details given by Mr. Morse, the only features which are really worth the notice of the civilized architect or house-builder are: first, the universal adoption of the mat of six feet by three as the architectural *modulus*; and, secondly, the division of apartments by movable screens. The floors are completely covered by mats, all of exactly the same size in all houses; so that the area of an apartment is always described by the number of mats it takes to cover it. From the architectural point of view, this practice secures a sense of proportion, the absence of which is the most painful defect in almost all European houses; and as regards the builder, it is a source of manifold convenience and economy. 'The architect marks on his plan the number of mats each room is to contain, this number defining the size of the room; hence the timber used must be of definite length, and the carpenter is sure to find these lengths at the lumber-yard. It follows that little waste occurs in the construction.' The floor, thus padded completely with thick and soft mats, supplies the place of almost all other furniture, the inhabitants sitting and sleeping on it and using it for their table. Mr. Morse has much to say on the luxury of unsuperfluousness in a Japanese house; but this luxury is obviously the result of an extremely limited civilization which knows few wants. That which distinguishes Japanese art and house-building from those of the real savage is that, as far as they go, the former are products of true artistic consciousness.

Of course, much allowance must be made for the fact that earthquake and fire are of such frequent recurrence as to justify the absence of all forms of stable and permanent building. Every town, being

wholly of wood, is sure every now and then to be completely swept away by conflagration ; and this contingency is systematically and elaborately provided for. Every house of even moderate pretensions has its *kura*, or fire-proof apartment, separate from the main building, built of very thick wood and clay, and able to resist the very transitory wave of flame which occasionally consumes the rest of the town. At the first appearance of fire in the neighbourhood every article of value in the house, and even the house itself if there is time, is packed up and secured in the *kura*. Earthquakes are so frequent that each house has its peculiarly constructed earthquake-door, through which 'in times of sudden danger the inmates escape ; the larger doors or rain-shutters being liable to get bound or jammed in the swaying of the building '.

APPENDIX I

TWO LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF THE *SATURDAY REVIEW*

I

THE POET AS THEOLOGIAN

[*Saturday Review*, June 15, 1895.]

LYMINGTON, HANTS,
June 8.

SIR,

I have to thank you for the considerate and therefore flattering article[1] in the *Saturday Review*. I have only to complain that the writer puts me on the side of the Priests instead of the Prophets, whereas my sympathies are, and always have been, quite the other way.

I am, Sir,
Yours truly,
COVENTRY PATMORE.

II

THE PROPOSED COMPLIMENT TO JOURNALISM

[*Saturday Review*, October 26, 1895.]

To the Editor of the *Saturday Review*.

LYMINGTON, HANTS,
October 21, 1895.

SIR,

A rumour is being circulated, through the Press and otherwise, that Lord Salisbury has expressed his intention of 'complimenting journalism' by selecting the Laureate

[1] A review of *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower*.

from its ranks. I wonder whether it has occurred to Lord Salisbury that it would be possible, at the same time, to pay a compliment to poetry. Surely, this might be gracefully included in the major intention. Curiously enough the most obvious things are often the last to be discerned, even by Prime Ministers. It seems to me that there is one writer only in whose person the double compliment could be united. Mrs. Meynell, though she writes almost always anonymously, is well known as having attained to the very front rank among English journalists. Her contributions to the *National Observer*, under Mr. Henley's editorship, are famous, and the Friday number of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, containing her column of the 'Wares of Autolycus' is scarcely less so. Among her signed articles, her paper in the *Fortnightly Review*, November 1894, stamps her as the finest English critic of modern times. In modern times, no other besides Goethe, Lessing, or Hegel could have written it. Mrs. Meynell has also political claims, without which journalism would probably not be considered as constituting a primary claim to the Laureateship; and these claims are exactly such as ought to recommend her to the sympathy of Lord Salisbury and his colleagues. She is well known, to perhaps the largest and most influential circle of literary men and women in London, to combine strong Radical principles with equally vigorous Tory tastes, the most charming attitude towards politics which a woman can possibly assume, and that which subserves Conservatism in the only way practicable in times which boast of being governed rather by the heart than by the head. Mrs. Meynell, indeed, does not write much on politics, but Lord Salisbury must be aware of the importance of ingratiating a lady, who by every intellectual and personal quality and accomplishment, is better fitted than any other woman in England to form the heart and life of a great literary and political *salon*.

As to the subsidiary or accidental claim of being a poet, if it be true that Mr. Swinburne and Mr. William Morris would not accept the Laureateship, any other appointment

but that which I am suggesting would be ridiculous; and a Government, even with a majority of 150, cannot afford to be ridiculous. No competent judge of poetry will maintain that any woman has ever surpassed, if any woman has ever equalled, Mrs. Meynell as a poetess. I *know* that this is not only my opinion; it is that of men among my friends and acquaintance whose taste is of the rarest and finest; and the opinion of these men, expressed in private and public criticism, has already had such influence on the higher circle of readers that this lady's poems have gone through three editions, while a fourth is on the point of appearing.

There remain two other reasons for the expediency of the appointment I suggest. Mr. Traill[1] has enumerated seventy-two living minor poets. I think he does not mention Mrs. Meynell; but he does me. Now every one of us thinks that he is the only possible Laureate, and I can assure Lord Salisbury that if he appoints any one but Mrs. Meynell, he will bring a fine nest of hornets about his head. We are nearly all of us more or less journalists, and, in the name of myself and my seventy-one brother journalists and poets, I can promise him that he will never hear the last of it, unless he silences us by nominating a Laureate whose sex at least will protect her and, indirectly, him from our stings.

Finally, what could be more graceful and opportune than that the reign of the best of Queens, and the age in which woman's claims occupy the world's attention as they never did before, should be marked by an appointment which would be as expedient and popular as it would be just?

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,
COVENTRY PATMORE.

[1] [H. D. Traill, 'Our Minor Poets', *Nineteenth Century*, January 1892. The list aimed at enumerating *all* then living poets of every degree, and did include Mrs. Meynell's name.]

APPENDIX II

AN ESSAY TOWARDS A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL LIST OF COVENTRY PATMORE'S PROSE CONTRIBUTIONS TO PERIODICAL LITERATURE

I. Early Articles.
II. Writings on Architecture.
III. Contributions to the *St. James's Gazette*, 1885–8.
IV. Other Later Articles.

For the most part the following articles were anonymous. For those marked with an asterisk there is internal evidence only, often quite conclusive ; for those queried, the evidence is inconclusive. The remainder have either been seen in Patmore's own collection, or are otherwise known to be his. The titles in italics are of pieces which he himself subsequently reprinted. It has been thought interesting to give separately his articles on architecture, and to present his contributions to the *St. James's Gazette* as a continuous series, omitting only the architectural articles. The words printed between brackets and quotation marks are written on his own copies of the several articles.

I. EARLY ARTICLES

1845	Jan.		(?) Leigh Hunt's 'Imagination and Fancy'.
	Feb.		*Emerson's Essays. Second Series. [See also Feb. 1846 ; Nov. 10, 1887.]
	June.		(?) Life of Jean Paul Richter.
	June.		*The Morbidness of the Age, signed An Optimist.
	July.	Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine.	*The Misanthrope, signed An Optimist.
	Sept.		*A few words connected with Optimism, signed An Optimist.
	Sept.		(?) Schiller's Philosophical and Aesthetic Letters.
	Sept.		(?) Eliza Cook and William Thom.
	Nov.		*The Man and his Age, signed An Optimist.

1846	Feb.		Emerson. [See also Feb. 1845: Nov. 10, 1887.]
	Feb.		*Donne.
	Mar.		*George Herbert.
	Apr.		*Herrick.
	May.	Lowe's Magazine.	*Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. [Cf. the articles on 'The Idylls of the King', July, Aug. 1859.]
	May.		*Hood's Poems.
	June.		*Sir Tristram and Sir Galahad.
	June.		*The New Timon.
	Feb. 18,19.	Daily News.	*Carlyle's 'Cromwell'.
	Mar. 9.	Daily News.	*The New Timon.
	July.	Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine.	(?) 'Modern Painters', vol. II. [See also p. 207 for other articles on Ruskin]
1847	May.	North British Review.	(?) Popular Serial Literature.
	Aug.	North British Review.	(?) German Lady Novelists.
1848	May.	The Critic.	(?) Schelling's Philosophy of Art.
	May.	North British Review.	Tennyson's Poems and Princess. [See also Aug. 1850; Oct. 1855; July, Aug. 1859.]
	Nov.	North British Review.	Milnes's Keats. [See also June 28, 1887.]
1849	Nov.	British Quarterly Review.	Ethics of Art.
	Nov.	North British Review.	Shakespeare. ['Reprint entire.'] [See next entry, and Aug. 1858.]
1850	Feb.	The Germ.	Essay on Macbeth.
	Aug.	Guardian.	(?) Notice of 'The Germ'.
	Aug.	Palladium.	'In Memoriam': a review. [See also May 1848; Oct. 1855; July, Aug. 1859.]
	Nov.	Palladium.	William Allingham's Poems. [See also Apr. 1854; Oct. 1856.]
1851	Feb.	North British Review.	*The Social Position of Women.
1852	Jan.	The Times.	Letter on Rifle Corps, signed C. K. P.
	Aug.	North British Review.	*American Poetry (Longfellow, Bryant, Poe, and T. Buchanan Read). [See also Aug. 15, 1857.]
	Aug.	British Quarterly Review.	(?) Margaret Fuller Ossoli.
1853	Nov.	North British Review.	*American Novels (Hawthorne, Mrs. Stowe, Miss Wetherell, Longfellow, Poe).
1854	Apr.	The Critic.	Allingham's 'Day and Night Songs'. [See also Nov. 1850; Oct. 1856.]

1855	Oct.	Edinburgh Review.	Tennyson's 'Maud' and 'In Memoriam'. (Marked 'Reprint entire': but certain passages are cut through in pencil, and one is marked 'Omit: this passage was added by H. Reeve'.) [See also May 1848; Aug. 1850; July, Nov. 1859.]
1856	Oct.	Edinburgh Review.	'New Poets' (Bailey, Dobell, A. Smith, Allingham, George Meredith, Owen Meredith, M. Arnold, &c.). ['Reprint marked passages only.']
	Oct.	National Review.	*Madame de Hautefort* and her Contemporaries. [A part only of this was reprinted in 'Merry England' (Aug. 1893) and included in 'Religio Poetae, &c.' (1893).]
	Oct. 25.	Literary Gazette.	(?) Massey's 'Craigcrook Castle'. [See also Mar. 15, 1859.]
1857	Feb.	Fraser's Magazine.	Swedenborg. [Signed C. P.: see also Apr. 1858; Apr. 16, 1886.]
	Feb.	North British Review.	Mrs. Browning's 'Poems' and 'Aurora Leigh'.
	July 4.	Saturday Review.	*A Pre-Raphaelite Exhibition.
	Aug.	North British Review.	*English Metrical Critics.* Included as a Prefatory Study of English Metrical Law in 'Amelia, &c.', 1878, and as an Appendix to vol. II of the collected poems.
	Aug. 15.	Saturday Review.	*T. Buchanan Read's 'Rural Poems'. [See also Aug. 1852.]
	Oct. 17.	Saturday Review.	(?) Alexander Smith's 'City Poems'.
	Dec. 26.	Saturday Review.	Walls and Wall-paintings at Oxford. [Rossetti, Burne-Jones, &c., at the Union.]
1858	Jan.	National Review.	Hashish. [Cf. with Essay on 'Dreams', May 7, 1887 (p. 97 of this book).]
	Feb. 20.	Literary Gazette.	(?) A polyglot of Foreign Proverbs. [See also Oct. 7, 1886.]
	Mar. 3.	Saturday Review.	(?) Recent Ultramontane Poetry (A. de Vere and E. Caswell). [See also July 16, 1887.]
	Mar. 20.	Literary Gazette.	(?) Kingsley's 'Andromeda', &c.
	Mar. 20.	Literary Gazette.	Professor J. S. Blackie: 'On Beauty'.
	Mar. 27.	Literary Gazette.	Richard Garnett's 'Primula'. [See also Aug. 1860.]
	Apr. 10.	Literary Gazette.	*'Anastasia.' [A poem by D. P. Starkey: published anonymously. C. P. says that he at

			first supposed it to be Dobell's sequel to 'Balder'.]
858	Apr. 10.	National Review.	Swedenborgiana. [See also Feb. 1857; Apr. 16, 1886.]
	July.	National Review.	The Troubadours. ['Reprint entire.']
	Aug.	North British Review.	The Modern British Drama. [Shakespeare, Sir Henry Taylor, W. C. Roscoe, 'Saul'. See also Nov. 1849, Aug. 1860.]
	Nov.	North British Review.	*The Decay of Modern Satire. ['Anti-Jacobin,' 'Biglow Papers,' and P. J. Bailey.]
	Nov. 27.	Saturday Review.	(?) Mediocre Poetry.
	Dec. 11.	Saturday Review.	(?) Poetical Physiology. (Michelet's 'L'Amour'.)
1859	Jan.	EdinburghReview.	Library of the British Museum.
		Fraser's Magazine.	Dramatic Treasure Trove. [P. G. Patmore's Sheridan MSS., presented to the British Museum by C. P.]
	Feb. 5.	Saturday Review.	*Miss Procter's 'Legends and Lyrics'. [See also May 1859.]
	Mar. 15.	Saturday Review.	(?) Massey's Poems. [See also Oct. 25, 1856.]
	May.	North British Review.	Miss Procter's 'Legends and Lyrics'; and Owen Meredith's 'The Wanderer'. [See also Oct. 1856; Feb. 5, 1859; Aug. 1860.]
	July.	EdinburghReview.	Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'.
	Aug.	North British Review.	*Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'. [See also May 1846; May 1848; Aug. 1850; Oct. 1855.]
	Nov.	North British Review.	William Barnes. [See also June 1862; Oct. 9, 1886; Nov. 1886; Dec. 19, 1887.]
1860	July.	National Review.	De Biran's 'Pensées'. ['Reprint the whole.']
	Aug.	North British Review.	*Recent Poetry. [W. C. Roscoe; R. Garnett; Owen Meredith, &c.: see also Oct. 1855; Mar. 27, 1858; Aug. 1858; May 1859.]
1862	June.	Macmillan's Magazine.	William Barnes. [See also Nov. 1859; Oct. 9, 1886; Nov. 1886; Dec. 19, 1887.]
1866	Jan.	Macmillan's Magazine.	*Mrs. Cameron's Photographs. [C. P.'s name is included in the List of Contributors to this volume. There is no article signed by him, but the internal evidence for his authorship of this article is conclusive.]

II. ARTICLES ON ARCHITECTURE

1847	Mar. 6.	The Critic.	(?) Lord Lindsay's 'Sketches of Christian Art'. [This article shows that the germ of Patmore's theory of the symbolic relations of Egyptian, Greek, and Gothic architecture—which the greater number of his architectural essays develop—existed in Lord Lindsay's book.]
1849	Aug.	British Quarterly Review.	Aesthetics of Gothic Architecture.
1850	Feb.	North British Review.	Ruskin's 'Seven Lamps'.
1851	May.	British Quarterly Review.	*Ruskin's 'Stones of Venice', vol. I.
	Aug.	North British Review.	Character in Architecture.
	Oct.	Edinburgh Review.	Sources of Expression in Architecture.
1852	Dec.	Fraser's Magazine.	Architects and Architecture.
1854	?	The Times.	Building Leases as affecting Architecture: a letter, signed C. K. P.
	May.	North British Review.	Ruskin and Architecture. [Stones of Venice, vols. II and III.]
	June.	The Critic.	(?) Ruskin's Lectures on Architecture and Painting.
1857	July.	National Review.	London Street Architecture.
	Dec. 26.	Saturday Review.	Walls and Wall-paintings at Oxford.
1858	Jan. 9.	Literary Gazette.	*Secular and Domestic Architecture.
	May.	North British Review.	*Gothic Architecture: Present and Future. [These last two are both reviews of Gilbert Scott's book.]
1872	Mar. 14.	Pall Mall Gazette.	(?) The Gothic Revival. [Sir E. T. Cook, 'Life of Ruskin,' thinks this may be C. P.'s, but internal evidence is rather against his authorship.]
1886	Apr. 30.	St. James's Gazette.	Architecture and Architectural Criticism. [See p. 178 of this book.]
	Oct. 12.	St. James's Gazette.	*Old English Architecture, Ancient and Modern.*
	Oct. 16.	St. James's Gazette.	*Ideal and Material Greatness in Architecture.*
	Oct. 30.	St. James's Gazette.	Expression in Architecture. [See p. 174.]
	Nov. 26, Dec. 4, 9, 11, 18.	St. James's Gazette.	*Architectural Styles.*
1887	Mar. 3.	St. James's Gazette.	Liverpool Cathedral. [See p. 183.]
	Mar. 10.	St. James's Gazette.	Churches and Preaching-Halls: a letter. [See p. 189.]
	Apr. 13.	St. James's Gazette.	Japanese Houses. [See p. 194.]
1892	Jan. 9.	Anti-Jacobin.	Builders' and House-Decorators' Prices. [Signed 'C. P.' See also Jan. 25, 1887.]

III. ARTICLES IN THE 'ST. JAMES'S GAZETTE', 1885–8

1885	Mar. 9	Robert Bridges's 'Prometheus the Firegiver'. [See p. 143 of this book; see also Dec. 31, 1885.]
	Dec. 12.	What about King Theebaw's Rubies. [See also next article, and under July 29, 1886.]
	Dec. 23.	Pleasures of Property. [With special reference to precious stones; see previous article and July 29, 1886.]
	Dec. 26.	Manifest Destiny. [See p. 9.]
	Dec. 29.	How to govern Ladylike Races: a letter.
	Dec. 31.	Robert Bridges's 'Eros and Psyche'. [See p. 147; also Mar. 9, 1885.]
1886	Jan. 2.	*Cheerfulness in Life and Art.*
	Jan. 6.	Concerning an Ancient and a Pernicious Delusion.
	Jan. 22.	Comparing small things with great. [See p. 65.]
	Jan. 29, Feb. 6.	*Seers, Thinkers, and Talkers.*
	Mar. 1.	Sonnets. [William Sharp's Anthology; quoted in *Memoir*, ii. 101–2.]
	Mar. 5.	*The Point of Rest in Art.*
	Mar. 6.	A letter 'To English Catholics'. [In *Memoir*, ii. 27.]
	Mar. 8.	Walt Whitman.
	Mar. 13.	Great Talkers: Coleridge. [See p. 70; see also Mar. 16, June 13, Dec. 6, 1887.]
	Mar. 20	Great Talkers: Goethe. [See p. 74.]
	Mar. 22.	Hegel. [See p. 105.]
	Mar. 23.	A letter on Bishop Bagshawe. [In *Memoir*, ii. 28.]
	Mar. 30.	Great Talkers: Luther. [See p. 79.]
	Apr. 1.	Sir Thomas Browne. [See p. 54.]
	Apr. 6.	A Book of Hunting Songs. [See p. 140.]
	Apr. 16.	Swedenborg. [See p. 101; also Feb. 1857; Apr. 1858.]
	Apr. 17.	Woolner's Tiresias. [See p. 151.]
	Apr. 21.	Minding one's own business. [See p. 17.]
	Apr. 27.	Calling a Spade a Spade. [See p. 20.]
	May 20, 21, 25, 27, 31, June 3, 5, 9.	*How I managed and improved my Estate.* [Published in book form, 1886.]
	July 6, 12, 16, 20.	*In the Sussex Marshes.* [Included in 'Hastings, Lewes, Rye, and the Sussex Marshes', 1887.]
	July 18.	A Psychical Romance. [A. P. Sinnett's 'United'.]
	July 29, 31, Aug. 3.	Investing in Precious Stones. [See also Dec. 12, 23, 1885.]
	Aug. 11, 14.	*Old Hastings.* [Included in 'Hastings, Lewes, Rye, &c.', 1887.]
	Aug. 27.	*Mayfield.* [Included in 'Hastings, Lewes, Rye, &c.', 1887.]
	Sept. 1.	*The Poetry of Negation.*
	Oct. 4.	Letter: Utilization of our Great Libraries, signed 'An Old Librarian'.
	Oct. 5.	Old Coach Roads. [See p. 40; C. P.'s copy is marked for inclusion in 'Hastings, Lewes, &c.', but was not included.]

1886	Oct. 6.	Letter: Lord Randolph Churchill's Dartford Speech, signed 'Coventry Patmore'.
	Oct. 7.	Proverbs and Bon-Mots. [See p. 28; see also Feb. 20, 1858.]
	Oct. 9.	William Barnes. [See p. 118; see also Nov. 1859; June 1862; Nov. 1886; Dec. 19, 1887.]
	Nov. 12.	*Shall Smith have a Statue?*
	Nov. 13.	The Morality of 'Epipsychidion'. [See p. 110; also next article, and Feb. 16, 1887.]
	Dec. 2.	*What Shelley was.*
	Dec. 14.	December in Garden and Field. [See p. 37.]
	Dec. 31.	*Love and Poetry.*
1887	Jan. 7.	*The Weaker Vessel.* [First half: see under Sept. 29, 1887, for remainder.]
	Jan. 17.	*Pathos.*
	Jan. 20.	*Rossetti as a Poet.*
	Jan. 25–27, Feb. 4.	Butchers' Prices (signed 'A Retired Sussex Farmer'.) [See also Jan. 9, 1892 (p. 207).]
	Feb. 16.	*Crabbe and Shelley.* [See also Nov. 13 and Dec. 2, 1886.]
	Feb. 26.	Unnatural Literature. [See p. 127.]
	Mar. 16.	Coleridge. [Hall Caine's Life of Coleridge: see p. 84; also Mar. 13, 1886, June 13, Dec. 6, 1887.]
	Mar. 23.	How is it to end? [See p. 24.]
	Mar. 31.	*Blake.*
	Apr. 2.	Thomas Hardy. [See p. 132.]
	Apr. 12.	Poetical Coups-Manqués. [See p. 114; also, for Sydney Dobell, Oct. 1856; Apr. 10, 1858.]
	May 7.	Dreams. [See p. 97.]
	May 21.	*The Limitations of Genius.*
	May 28.	John Marston. [See p. 51.]
	May 31.	*Poetical Integrity.*
	June 13.	Prof. Brandl on Coleridge. [See p. 88; also Mar. 13, 1886; Mar. 16, Dec. 6, 1887.]
	June 23.	*Swinburne's Selections.* [In '*Principle in Art*, &c.', 1889: since omitted.]
	June 28.	*Keats.* [See also Nov. 1848.]
	July 9.	Out-of-Door Poetry. [See p. 32.]
	July 16.	Aubrey de Vere's Poems. [See p. 154; also Mar. 3, 1858.]
	July 20.	*Principle in Art.*
	Aug. 27.	A Safe Charity. [See p. 46.]
	Sept. 29.	*Why Women are Dissatisfied* (the latter half of the Essay, *The Weaker Vessel*. See Jan. 7, 1887.)
	Nov. 1.	Letter: Lunacy and Punning.
	Nov. 10.	*Emerson.* [See also Feb. 1845; Feb. 1846.]

1887	Dec. 6.	Memorials of Coleorton. [See p. 92; also, for Coleridge, Mar. 13, 1886; Mar. 16, June 13, 1887.]
	Dec. 19.	Life of William Barnes. [See p. 121; also Nov. 1859; June 1862; Oct. 9, 1886; Nov. 1886.]
	Dec. 20.	The Future of Poetry: a letter, signed 'Scientist'. [In *Memoir*, i. 387.]
1888	Jan. 16.	Goldsmith. [See p. 59.]
	Jan. 20.	*Real Apprehension.*
	Feb. 18.	*Imagination.*
	Mar. 12.	The Revanche: Sedan or Waterloo? (a letter). [In *Memoir*, i. 322–4.]
	Mar. 14.	*Possibilities and Performances.*
	Mar. 19.	Courage in Politics. [See p. 11.]
	Aug. 10.	*Arthur Hugh Clough.*

IV. OTHER LATER ARTICLES

1886	Nov.	Fortnightly Review.	*An English Classic: William Barnes.* [See also Nov. 1859; June 1862; Oct. 9, 1886; Dec. 19, 1887.]
1887	Aug.	Fortnightly Review.	*Thoughts on Knowledge, Opinion, and Inequality.*
1890	June.	Fortnightly Review.	*Distinction.*
1891	Jan. 31.	Anti-Jacobin.	*Impressionist Art.* [Reprinted in *Relligio Poetae*, &c., 1893, as 'Emotional Art'.]
	Feb. 7(?)	Anti-Jacobin.	*Bad Morality is Bad Art.*
	Feb. 14.	Anti-Jacobin.	*Conscience.*
	Apr. 18.	Anti-Jacobin.	*Simplicity.*
	Sept. 26.	Anti-Jacobin.	Mrs. Walford's Novels. [See pp. 134, 137.]
1892	July.	Fortnightly Review.	Three Essayettes: *Christianity and 'Progress'; A 'Pessimist' Outlook; A Spanish Novelette.*
	Sept.	Merry England.	*Peace in Life and Art.*
	Nov.	Merry England.	*Attention.*
	Dec.	Merry England.	*On Obscure Books.*
	Dec.	Fortnightly Review.	*Mrs. Meynell's Poetry and Essays.* [See also Oct. 26, 1895; June 13, 1896.
1893	Apr.	Merry England.	*The Language of Religion.*
	Aug.	Merry England.	*Madame de Hautefort.* [See also Oct. 1856.]
1894	Jan.	Fortnightly Review.	A New Poet: Francis Thompson. [See p. 157.]
1895	Oct. 26.	Saturday Review.	The Proposed Compliment to Journalism: a letter. [See p. 200; also Dec. 1892, and below.]
1896	June 13.	Saturday Review.	Mrs. Meynell's New Essays. [See p. 166; also previous entry, and Dec. 1892.]